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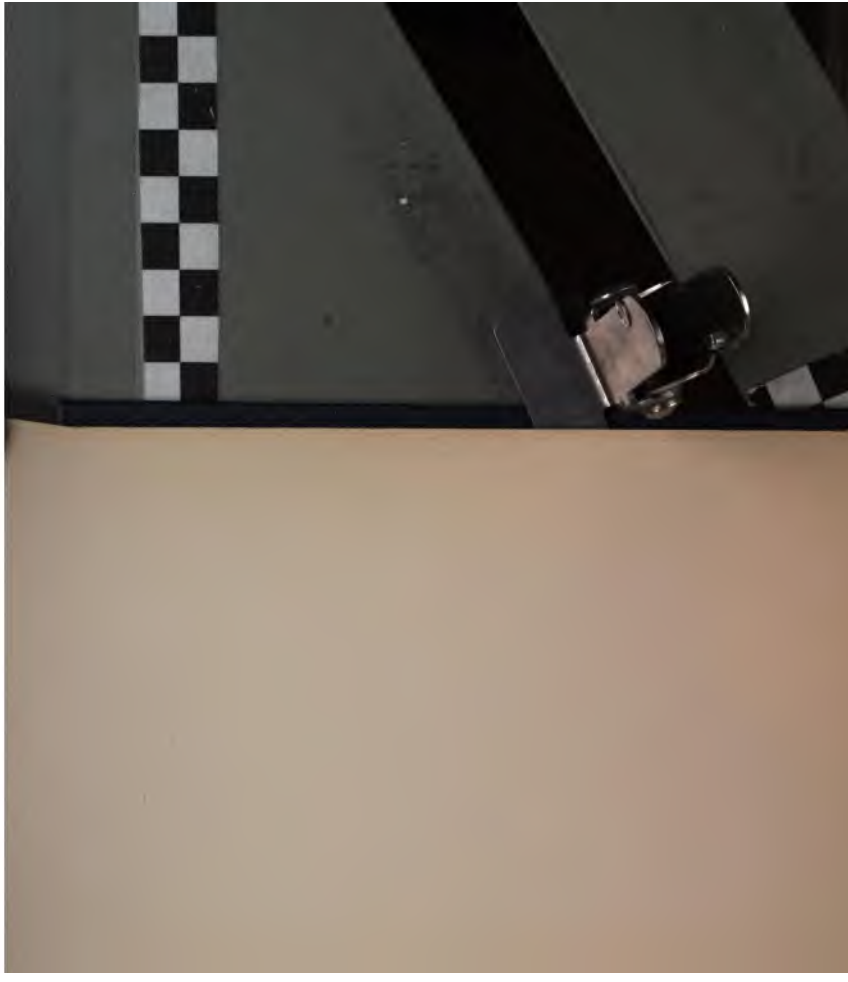
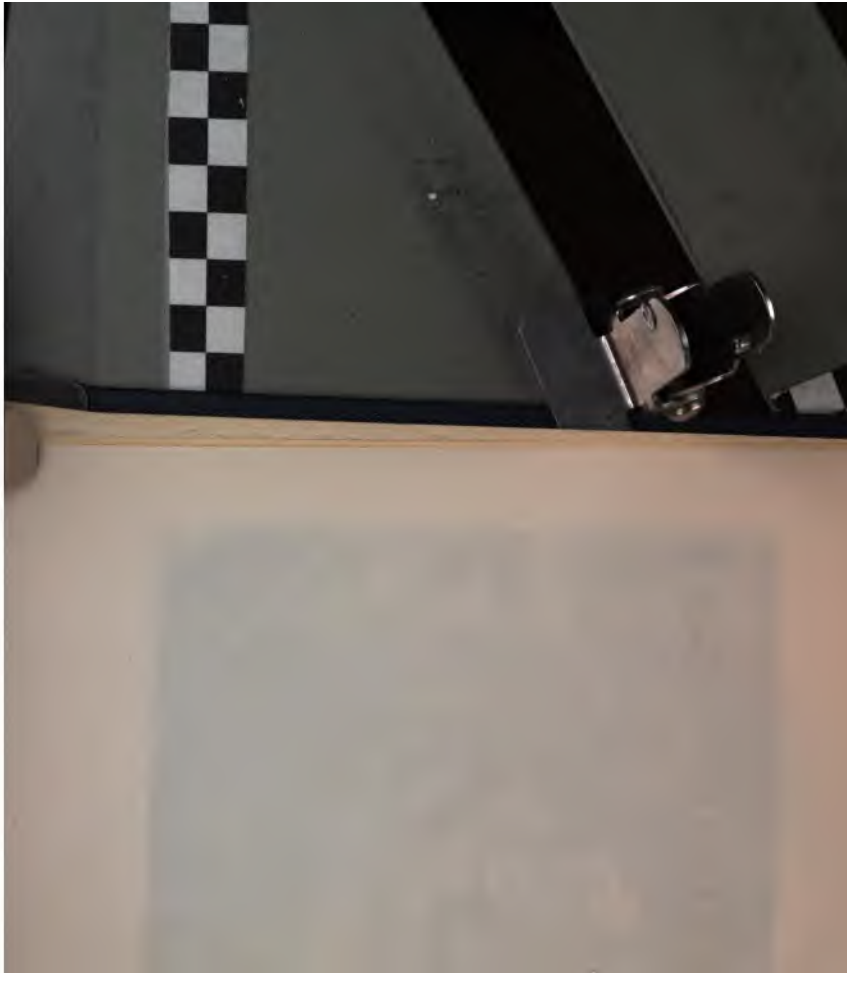


THE MEETING ON THE CANAL

A gayly-decorated boat filled with maskers and musicians was coming along the Giudecca Canal. I suggested to Juliette that we take a gondola and row near to it, to see the costumes. She assented.



NOVELS

BY

GEORGE SAND

VOLUME VI

THE SIN OF MONSIEUR ANTOINE

VOL. II

LEONE LEONI

PRINTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH

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THE SIN OF MONSIEUR ANTOINE

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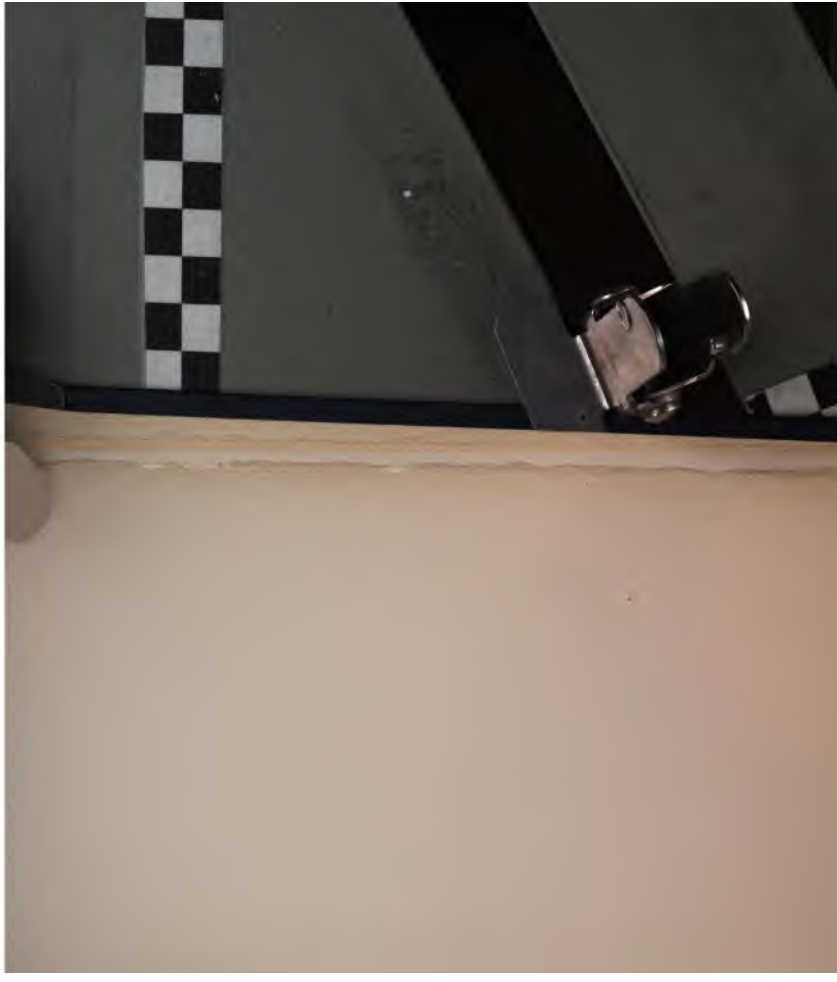

XXIV

MONSIEUR GALUCHET

But, after sleeping twelve hours, Galuchet had only a very confused remembrance of the events of the preceding day, and, when Monsieur Cardonnet sent for him, he retained only a vague feeling of resentment against the carpenter. Moreover, he was little inclined to boast of having cut such an absurd figure at the outset of his diplomatic career, and he attributed his late rising and his sluggish manner to a violent sick-headache. "I did nothing but feel the ground," he replied to his master's questions. "I was feeling so miserable that I could not watch very closely. I can only assure you that they have very vulgar manners in that house, that they live on a footing of equality with peasants, and that the table is very poorly served."

"That is no news to me," said Monsieur Cardonnet; "it is impossible that you can have passed the whole day at Châteaubrun without noticing something more definite. At what hour did my son arrive, at what time did he leave?"

"I can't tell you just what time it was,—their old clock is so far out of the way!"

"That's not an answer. How many hours did he stay there? Come, I don't ask you to be exact to a minute."

"It must have been five or six hours, monsieur; I was horribly bored. Monsieur Emile seemed far from glad to see me; and as for the girl, she's a downright prude. It was fearfully hot on that mountain, and I couldn't say two words without being interrupted by that peasant."

"I can imagine it, for you don't say two words in succession this morning, Galuchet; what peasant do you mean?"

"That carpenter, Jappeloup, a miserable fellow, an animal who presumes to be familiar with everybody, and who speaks of monsieur as *Père Cardonnet,* as if he were speaking of his equal."

"That doesn't trouble me; but what did my son say to him?"

"Monsieur Emile laughed at his nonsense and Mademoiselle Gilberte thinks he is charming."

"Did you notice any *asides* between her and my son?"

"No, monsieur, not exactly. The old woman—who is certainly her mother, for she calls her *my girl*—hardly ever leaves her, and it can't be very easy to pay court to her, especially as she is very high and mighty, and puts on the airs of a princess. That's very becoming in her, on my word, with the dress she wears and not a sou! If they should offer her to me, I wouldn't have her!"

"No matter, Galuchet; you must pay court to her."

"To laugh at her, when the time comes—I agree to that!"

"And also to earn a reward, which you will not get unless you bring me a clearer and more circumstantial report next time; for you are all astray to-day."

Galuchet bent his head over his books and fought all day against the discomfort that follows over-indulgence.

Emile passed the whole week head over ears in hydro-

statics; he indulged in no other distraction than to seek out Jean Jappeloup in the evening and chat with him; and, as he always tried to bring the conversation around to Gilberte, the carpenter finally said to him:

"Look you, Monsieur Emile, you never get tired of that subject, that's clear enough. Do you know that Mère Janille thinks you are in love with her child?"

"What an idea!" rejoined the young man, confused by this sudden apostrophe.

"It's a sensible idea enough. Why shouldn't you be in love with her?"

"True, why shouldn't I be in love with her?" echoed Emile, more and more embarrassed. "But can it be that you would speak jestingly of such a possibility, friend Jean?"

"I should say that you were the one, my boy, for you answer me as if we were in jest. Come, why not tell me the truth? out with it or I'll not talk to you any more."

"Jean, if I were really in love with a person for whom I have as much respect as for my own mother, my best friend should know nothing of it."

"I know very well that I am not your best friend, and yet I should like to have you tell me."

"Explain yourself, Jean."

"Explain yourself, rather; I am waiting."

"You will wait a long time; for I have no answer to make to such a question, despite all my esteem and affection for you."

"If that is so, you will have to say adieu forever one of these days to the people at Châteaubrun; for *ma mie* Janille is not the woman to sleep long when danger is brewing."

"That word offends me; I do not think that I can be

accused of bringing danger upon a person whose reputation and dignity are as sacred to me as to her kindred and dearest friends."

"That sounds very well, but it isn't a straight answer to all my questions. Do you want me to tell you something?—early last week I went to Châteaubrun to borrow of Antoine a tool that I needed. I found *ma mie* Janille there; she was all alone, expecting you. You didn't come and she told me all. And now, my boy, if she didn't frown on you Sunday, and if she allows you to call from time to time to see her girl, you are indebted to me for it."

"How so, my good Jean?"

"Because I have more confidence in you than you have in me. I told *ma mie* Janille that if you loved Gilberte you would marry her, and that I would answer for you on the salvation of my soul."

"And you were right, Jean," cried Emile, grasping the carpenter's hand; "you never told a greater truth."

"Very good! but the question still remains whether you are in love, and that is what you won't tell me."

"It is what I can tell you alone, since you question me so closely. Yes, Jean, I love her, I love her more than my life, and I mean to marry her."

"I give my consent," replied Jean in a tone of enthusiastic satisfaction, "and so far as I am concerned, I join your hands—One moment! one moment!—provided that Gilberte gives her consent too."

"And if she should ask your advice, my good Jean, who are her friend and second father?"

"I should tell her that she can make no better choice, that you suit me and that I am willing to be your surety."

"Good! now my friend, we only have to obtain the consent of the parents."

"Oh! I'll answer for Antoine, if I take hold of the affair. He has some pride, and he will be afraid that your father may hesitate, but I know what to say to him on that subject."

"What will you say to him, pray?"

"Something that you don't know, something that nobody knows but me. I don't need to speak yet, for the time has not come, and you can't think of marrying for a year or two."

"Jean, confide this secret to me as I confided mine to you. I see but one obstacle to our marriage, my father's obstinacy. I have resolved to overcome it, but I do not conceal from myself that it is very serious."

"Well, as you have been so trustful and frank with old Jean, old Jean will be the same with you. Listen, my boy; before long your father will be ruined and will have no further excuse for putting on airs with the Châteaubrun family."

"If what you say should turn out to be true, I should bless your strange prophecy, notwithstanding my father's inevitable grief and disappointment; for I have many reasons for dreading this great wealth."

"I know it; I know your heart, and I see that you would like to enrich others before enriching yourself. Everything will turn out as you wish, I am sure. I have dreamed of it more than ten times."

"If you have done nothing more than dream, my dear Jean——"

"Wait, wait. What is that book you always carry under your arm and that you seem to be studying?"

"I have already told you, a scientific treatise on the power and weight of water and the laws of equilibrium."

"I remember—you have told me before; but I tell

you that your book lies, or else you have read it wrong; otherwise you would know what I know."

"What is that?"

"That your factory is impossible, and that your father, if he persists in fighting against a stream that snaps its fingers at him, will lose his outlay and will discover his folly too late. That is why I have been so cheerful for some time past. I was depressed and out of temper as long as I thought that your undertaking might succeed; but I had one hope that kept coming to my mind again and again, and I determined to satisfy myself about it. So I walked and worked and used my eyes and studied. Oh! yes, studied, and I didn't read your books and your maps and your figuring; I saw and understood everything. Monsieur Emile, I am only a poor peasant, and your Galuchet would spit on me if he dared; but I can tell you of one thing that you hardly suspect, and that is that your father has no idea of what he is doing, that he has taken bad advice, and that you don't know enough about it to set him right. The coming winter will carry away your works, and every winter will carry off whatever there is, until Monsieur Cardonnet has thrown his last three-franc piece into the water. Remember what I tell you, and don't try to persuade your father. It would be one more reason for him to persist in ruining himself, and we don't need that to induce him to do it; but you will be ruined, my son, and if not altogether here, you will be somewhere else, for I hold your papa's brain in the hollow of my hand. It is a powerful brain, I admit, but it is a madman's brain. He is a man who works himself into a frenzy for his schemes to such an extent that he considers them infallible, and when a man is built that way he never succeeds in anything. I thought at first that he had played

his hand out, but now I see that the game is becoming serious, for he is beginning to rebuild all that the last freshet destroyed. He had had too good luck until then; still another reason—good luck makes a man overbearing and presumptuous. That is the history of Napoléon, whom I saw rise and fall, like a carpenter who climbs to the roof of a house without looking to see if the foundations are solid. However good a carpenter he may be—however fine a building he may build—if the wall totters, good-bye to the whole work!"

Jean spoke with such conviction, and his black eyes gleamed so bright beneath his grizzly bushy eyebrows, that Emile could not help being moved. He begged him to give his reasons for talking as he did, and the carpenter refused for a long time. At last, conquered by his persistence, and a little irritated by his doubts, he made an appointment with him for the following Sunday.

"You can go to Châteaubrun Saturday or Monday instead," he said, "and on Sunday we will start at daybreak and go up the stream to certain places that I will point out to you. Take all your books and all your instruments if you choose. If they don't confirm me, it's of little consequence; it will be science that lies. But don't expect to make this trip on horseback or in a carriage; and if you haven't good legs, don't expect to make it at all."

On the following Saturday Emile went to Châteaubrun, beginning, as usual, with Boisguilbault, as he dared not appear too early at Gilberte's.

As he approached the ruins he saw a black speck at the foot of the mountain, and that speck soon became Constant Galuchet, in a black coat, black trousers and gloves, black satin cravat and waistcoat. That was his costume in the country, winter and summer alike; and

no matter how great the heat or the fatigue which he was about to undergo, he never left the village except in that ceremonious attire. He would have been afraid of resembling a peasant if, like Emile, he had donned a blouse and broad-brimmed gray hat.

If it be true that the bourgeois costume of our generation is the most depressing, the most inconvenient and the most unbecoming that fashion ever invented, it is equally true that all its inconveniences and deformities are most striking in the open country. In the outskirts of the large cities, one's eyes are less offended, because everything there is arranged, aligned, planked, built and walled in symmetrically, so that all the informality and charm of nature are destroyed. We may sometimes admire the beauty and symmetry of those estates which have been subjected to all the refinements of civilization; but it is very hard to imagine oneself loving such a region. The real country is not there, but in the heart of the fields, neglected and untilled to some extent, where agriculture has no thought of paltry embellishments and strict limits, where estates run together and where boundaries are indicated only by a stone or bush, put in place in full reliance upon rustic good faith. There the roads, intended only for foot passengers, equestrians or heavy carts, present innumerable picturesque irregularities; the hedges, abandoned to their natural vigor, hang in garlands, from leafy arbors, and deck themselves out with the wild climbing plants which are carefully removed in more pretentious regions. Emile remembered that he had walked about within several leagues of Paris without the pleasure of seeing a nettle, and he felt keenly the charm of that rural scenery amid which he now found himself. Poverty did not hide, in shame and degradation, beneath the feet of wealth. On the contrary it

made itself manifest, light-hearted and free, on a soil which proudly bore its emblems, wild flowers and vagabond plants, the humble moss and the wood-strawberry, the water-cress on the brink of a stream with no well-defined bed, and the ivy clinging to a rock that had obstructed the path for centuries, without attracting the attention of the police. He loved the branches which overhung the road and were respected by passers-by; the bog-holes in which the frog croaked softly as if to warn the traveller,—a more vigilant sentinel than he who guards a king's palace; the old crumbling walls around the enclosure, which no one thought of rebuilding, the powerful roots which pushed up the ground and dug holes at the foot of the venerable trees; all that lack of art which makes nature ingenuous and which harmonizes so well with the severe type and grave and simple costume of the peasant.

But let that parasitic insect, that *monsieur* with the black coat, cleanly shaven chin, gloved hands and shambling legs, appear in the midst of that austere and impressive scene, which carries the imagination back to the epoch of primitive poesy, and that king of society becomes simply a ridiculous blotch, an annoying imperfection in the picture. What business have your funereal garments in this bright sunlight, where their creases seem to laugh scornfully as at a victim? Your offensive, misplaced costume inspires more pity than the poor man's rags; we feel that you are out of place in the fresh air and that your livery crushes you.

Never had these reflections presented themselves so vividly to Emile's mind as when Galuchet appeared before him, hat in hand, climbing the hill with a painful exertion which caused his coat-tails to flutter in laughable fashion, and pausing to brush away with his hand-

kerchief the traces of frequent falls. Emile was strongly inclined to laugh at first; and then he asked himself angrily why the parasite was buzzing around the sacred hive. He urged his horse to a gallop, passed Galuchet without seeming to recognize him, arrived first at Châteaubrun, and announced the other's coming to Gilberte as an unavoidable calamity.

"Oh! father," said she, "don't receive that ill-bred, disagreeable man, I entreat you! let us not spoil our Châteaubrun, our home, our pleasant, unceremonious life, by the presence of this stranger, who never can and never will be in sympathy with us."

"What do you expect me to do with him, for heaven's sake?" said Monsieur de Châteaubrun, sorely embarrassed. "I invited him to come whenever he chose; I could not foresee that you, who are usually so long-suffering and generous, would take such a dislike to a poor devil because of his bad manners and his unattractive face. For my part I pity such people; I see that everyone spurns them and that life is a bore to them."

"Don't believe that," said Emile. "On the contrary they are very well satisfied and imagine that everybody likes them."

"In that case, why rob them of a delusion without which they would probably die of grief? I haven't courage to do it, and I don't believe that my dear Gilberte would advise me to have it."

"My too kind-hearted father!" rejoined Gilberte with a sigh; "I wish that I were as kind-hearted, too; indeed, I believe I am, generally speaking; but that conceited, self-satisfied creature, who seems to me to insult me when he looks at me, and who called me by my Christian name the first day he ever spoke to me!—no, I can't endure him, and I feel that he has a bad effect on me, be-

cause the sight of him makes me disdainful and sarcastic, contrary to my instincts and my character."

"It is certain that Monsieur Galuchet will become very familiar with mademoiselle," said Emile to Monsieur Antoine, "and that you will be compelled more than once to remind him of the respect he owes her. If it happens that he forces you to turn him out of the house, you will regret having received him with too much confidence. Wouldn't it be better to give him to understand by a somewhat chilly welcome that you have not forgotten the ungentlemanly way he behaved on his first visit?"

"The best way that I can think of to arrange matters," said Monsieur de Châteaubrun, "is for you two to go out in the orchard with Janille; I will take Galuchet out fishing and you will be rid of him."

This suggestion was not particularly agreeable to Emile. When he was under Monsieur de Châteaubrun's eye, he could almost believe that he was tête-à-tête with Gilberte, whereas Janille was an exceedingly active and keen-eyed third. Moreover Gilberte thought that it would be selfish to compel her father to bear alone the burden of such a visitor.—"No," she said, kissing him, "we will stay here to keep you in bad temper; for if we turn our backs on you, you will be so sweet and good-natured that monsieur will believe that he is welcome, once for all. Oh! I know you, father! you wouldn't be able to refrain from telling him so and from keeping him at the table, and then he will drink again! It will be very wise for me to stay here and force him to keep watch on himself."

"Oh! I'll look out for that," said Janille, who had listened thus far without giving her opinion, and who hated Galuchet ever since the day he had haggled over a ten-sou piece for which she asked him after showing

him the ruins. "I like to have monsieur drink his wine with his friends and the people he likes; but I don't approve of wasting it on parasites, and I propose to give Monsieur Galuchet's wine a good baptizing. But you don't like water, monsieur, and that will make you cut short your stay at the table."

"Why, Janille, this is downright tyranny," said Monsieur Antoine. "You say you are going to put me on a water diet? do you want me to die, pray?"

"No, monsieur, your skin will be all the brighter for it, and if yonder little fellow makes a wry face at it, so much the worse for him."

Janille kept her word, but Galuchet was too disturbed in mind to notice it. He felt more and more ill at ease in the presence of Emile, whose eyes and smile seemed to be always questioning him sternly, and when he tried to pluck up courage and play the agreeable with Gilberte, he was so coldly received that he knew not what to do. He had determined to be very careful in the matter of the Châteaubrun wine, and he was well pleased when his host, after the first glass, neglected to invite him to take a second. Monsieur Antoine, when he led the way with the first bumper, as his duty as host required, stifled a sigh and glanced at Janille as if to reproach her for the liberality with which she had measured the admixture of water. Charasson, who was in the old woman's confidence, roared with laughter, and was sternly reprimanded by his master, who sentenced him to drink the rest of the harmless beverage with his supper.

When Galuchet was convinced that he was intolerable to Gilberte and Emile, he determined to advance his interests with Monsieur Cardonnet by venturing upon the proposal of marriage. He led Monsieur Antoine aside,

and, feeling sure of being refused, offered his heart, his hand and his twenty thousand francs for his daughter. Monsieur Galuchet did not consider that he risked anything by doubling the fictitious capital of his marriage-portion.

This little fortune, in addition to a place which was worth about twelve hundred francs a year, surprised Monsieur Antoine extremely. It was a very good match for Gilberte; indeed, she could aspire to nothing better in the matter of wealth, for it was impossible for the excellent country gentleman to provide her with any dowry whatever, even if he should strip himself entirely. No one on earth was ever more unselfish than that worthy man; he had given proofs enough of it during his life. But he could not, without some bitterness, reflect that his darling daughter, failing to meet a man who would love her for her own sake, would probably be condemned to live single for many years, perhaps forever!

"What an unfortunate thing," he said to himself, "that this fellow isn't more attractive, for he is certainly honest and generous. My daughter takes his fancy, and he doesn't ask how much money she has. Doubtless he knows that she has nothing, and means to give her all he possesses. He is a well-intentioned suitor, whom I must refuse respectfully, pleasantly and with friendly words."

And not knowing how to go about it—not daring to expose Gilberte to the suspicion of being vain of her name or to the resentment of a heart wounded by her manifest aversion—he could think of no better way than to avoid giving a definite answer, and to ask for time to reflect and take counsel. Galuchet also asked leave to come again, not precisely to pay his court to Gilberte,

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self with much satisfaction that he was strong enough to hold his own against him. As for a genuine duel, that would have been less to his liking, because he had had no experience of duellists' weapons; but he could safely rely upon Monsieur Cardonnet to preserve him from that danger.

While he was talking with Janille, Monsieur de Châteaubrun remained in the orchard with his daughter and Emile, and told them what had taken place between him and Galuchet, albeit with some oratorical precautions. "Oh!" said he, "you call him an impertinent fool, but you will regret your harsh judgment of him; for he is really a very worthy fellow, and I have proof of that. I can tell this before Emile, who is our friend; and if Gilberte would look at the matter without prejudice, she might ask him some questions concerning this young man. Tell me, Emile, on your heart and conscience, is he an honest man?"

"Beyond any question," Emile replied. "My father has employed him for three years and would be very sorry to lose him."

"Is his character good?"

"Although he can hardly be said to have proved it here the other day, I must say that he is very peaceable, and ordinarily quite harmless."

"He isn't in the habit of getting drunk?"

"Not so far as I know."

"Well, then, what have you against him?"

"If he had not taken the fancy to become our guest, I should consider him an accomplished man," said Gilberte.

"Is he so very disagreeable to you?" said Monsieur Antoine, standing still to look her in the face.

"Why, no, father," she replied, surprised by the sol-

emnity of his manner. "Do not take my dislike so seriously. I hate nobody; and if this young man's company is at all agreeable to you, if he has given you good reason to esteem him particularly, God forbid that I should deprive you of any pleasure by a mere caprice! I will make an effort, and perhaps I shall succeed in sharing the good opinion that my excellent father has of him."

"Spoken like a good, sensible girl, and I recognize my Gilberte. Let me tell you then, little one, that you are the last one who should despise this young man's character; and that, even though you do not feel attracted to him, you ought at least to treat him politely and dismiss him kindly. Come, do you understand me?"

"Not the least in the world, father."

"I am afraid that I understand," said Emile, his cheeks flushing scarlet.

"Well," continued Monsieur Antoine, "I will suppose that a young man, quite wealthy compared to us, notices a beautiful, virtuous girl who is very poor, and that, falling in love at first sight, he lays at her feet the most honorable proposals you can imagine—should he be dismissed roughly, turned out of doors with a: 'Monsieur, you are too ugly.'"

Gilberte blushed as hotly as Emile, and, strive as she would to be humble, she felt so insulted by Galuchet's proposals that she could make no reply, while her eyes filled with tears.

"The miserable fellow has lied shamefully to you," cried Emile, "and you can safely turn him away with contempt. He has no fortune, and my father rescued him from absolute destitution. Now, he has only been in his employ three years, and unless he has suddenly received some mysterious legacy——"

"No, Emile, no, he has told no lie; I am not so weak

and credulous as you think. I questioned him and I know that the source of his little fortune is pure and unquestionable. Your father has promised him twenty thousand francs, in order to attach him permanently to his service by affection and gratitude, in case he marries in the province."

"But," said Emile in a trembling voice, "my father certainly cannot know that he has presumed to raise his eyes to Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun, for he would not have encouraged him in such a hope."

"On the contrary," rejoined Monsieur Antoine, to whom the affair seemed perfectly natural, "he has confided to your father his liking for Gilberte, and your father authorized him to use his name in support of his offer of marriage."

Gilberte turned deathly pale and looked at Emile, who lowered his eyes, stupefied, humiliated, and wounded to his heart's core.

XXV

THE EXPLOSION

"Well, well, what's the matter?" said Janille, joining them under a rustic arbor near the orchard, where they were sitting, all three; "why is Gilberte so woebegone, and why do you all keep quiet when I come near, as if you were plotting some conspiracy?"

Gilberte threw herself in her nurse's arms and burst into tears.

"Well, well," continued the good little woman, "here's something else! My little girl is unhappy and I don't know what the matter is! Will you speak, Monsieur Antoine?"

"Has that young man gone?" said Monsieur Antoine, looking about him uneasily.

"To be sure he has, for he took leave of me and I went with him as far as the gate," said Janille. "I had some difficulty in getting rid of him. He's a little dull about explaining himself. He would have liked to stay, I saw that well enough; but I gave him to understand that such affairs couldn't be settled so fast, that I must consult with you, and that we would write to him if we wanted to see him again for any reason. But, before I say anything more, what's the matter with my girl? who has hurt her feelings? Ah! but *ma mie* Janille is here to protect her and comfort her."

"Oh! yes, you will understand me," cried Gilberte, "and you will help me to repel the insult, for I feel insulted and I need you to help me make my father understand it. Why, he almost acts as Monsieur Galuchet's advocate!"

"Ah! so you already know what is going on, do you? In that case it's a family affair. I have something to tell you, too; but all this will bore Monsieur Emile."

"I understand you, my dear Mademoiselle Janille," the young man replied, "and I know that the proprieties, as ordinarily understood, would require me to withdraw; but I am too deeply interested in what is going on here to consider myself bound by common customs; you can safely speak before me, as I know everything now."

"Very well, monsieur, if you know what is in the wind, and if Monsieur Antoine has thought best to state his views before you,—which, between ourselves, was

hardly worth while—I will speak as if you were not here. And in the first place, Gilberte, you mustn't cry; what is it that makes you feel so bad, my girl? Because a poor fool considers himself worthy of you? Oh! bless my soul, it isn't the last time that you will have the pleasure, married or not, of seeing self-sufficient people make themselves ridiculous; for you must laugh at them, my child, and not be angry. This fellow thinks that he does you honor and gives you proof of esteem; receive it as such, and tell him or have somebody else tell him in all seriousness that you thank him, but that you will have none of him. I can't see at all why you are so disturbed; do you happen to think that I am disposed to encourage him? Ah! he might have a hundred thousand francs, or a hundred million, and I shouldn't think he was the man for my girl! The villain, with his big eyes and his air of satisfaction at being in the world—let him look farther! we have no girl here to give him. Oh! *ma mie* Janille knows what she is talking about, she knows that they don't put the thistle beside the rose in the same bouquet."

"That is well said, dear Janille!" cried Emile, "and you are worthy to be called her mother!"

"What concern is it of yours, pray, monsieur?" retorted Janille, warmed up and exalted by her own eloquence. "What have you to do with our little affairs? Do you know anything wrong about this suitor? If you do, it's of no use to tell us, for we don't need you to help us to get rid of him."

"Stop, Janille, don't scold him," said Gilberte, kissing her old friend. "It does me good to hear it said that that man's proposals are insulting to me, for it humiliates me to think of them. It makes me cold and sick. And yet father doesn't understand it! He considers

himself honored by his offer, and will not say anything to keep him out of my sight!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Janille, "he is the one who is at fault, as usual—the bad man! It is he who makes his daughter cry! Look you, monsieur, do you propose to play the tyrant here, I should like to know? Don't look forward to that, for *ma mie* Janille isn't dead and has no desire to die."

"That's right," said Monsieur Antoine; "of course I am a despot, an unnatural father! All right! all right! fall to on me if it relieves you. After that, perhaps my daughter will be kind enough to tell me what the matter is, and what I have done that's so criminal."

"Dear father," said Gilberte, throwing herself into his arms, "let us stop this melancholy jesting, and do you make haste to dismiss Monsieur Galuchet forever, so that I can breathe freely again and forget this bad dream."

"Ah! there's the rub," said Monsieur Antoine; "the trouble is to know what I am to write to him, and that is something it will be well to consult about."

"Do you know, mother," said Gilberte to Janille, "he doesn't know what answer to give him? Apparently he wasn't able to say no to him."

"Well, my child, your father didn't do very wrong," replied Janille, "for I listened to your fine suitor's offer without getting excited, and I didn't say yes or no to him. There! there! don't be angry. That's the right way to do, and then consult calmly. You can't say to the fellow: 'I don't like you;' people don't say that sort of thing. You can't say to him either: 'We belong to a good family and your name is Galuchet;' for that would be unkind and mortifying."

"And it wouldn't be any reason," said Gilberte.

"What does nobility matter to us now? True nobility is in the heart and not in empty titles. It isn't the name of Galuchet that disgusts me, but the manners and feelings of the man who bears it."

"My daughter is right: name, profession and fortune are nothing," said Monsieur Antoine. "So those are not the means for us to use. Nor can we blame a man for his physical defects. The best thing for us to say is that Gilberte doesn't want to marry."

"Allow me, monsieur, one moment," said Janille. "I don't propose to have you say that; for if this young man should go about repeating it—as he wouldn't fail to do—no one else would come forward, and I am not in favor of my girl turning nun."

"But we must give some reason," said Monsieur Antoine. "Suppose we say that she doesn't want to marry yet, and that we think she's too young."

"Yes, yes, that's it, father! you have hit upon the best reason, and it's the true one. I do not want to marry yet; I am too young."

"That is not true!" cried Janille. "You are old enough, and I believe that before long you will find a good husband whom you like and whom we all like."

"Don't think of that, mother," said Gilberte, warmly. "I will take my oath before God that my father told the truth. I do not want to marry yet, and I want everybody to know it, so that all suitors may keep away. Oh dear! if I am to be surrounded by such importunate creatures, you will take away all the happiness I have in my home, and make my youth sad and gloomy! and you will make me unhappy to no purpose, for I shall not change my resolution, and I will die rather than part from you."

"Who says anything about parting?" rejoined Ja-

nille. "The man who loves you won't want to make you unhappy; and, more than that, you don't know what you will think when you love someone. Ah! my dear child! then it will be our turn to weep, perhaps, for it is written that the woman shall leave her father and mother to follow her husband, and He who said that knew a woman's heart."

"Oh! that is a law of obedience, not a law of love," cried Emile. "The man who truly loves Gilberte will truly love her parents and her friends as his own, and will no more desire to separate her from them than he will desire to live apart from them himself."

At that moment Janille encountered the passionate glances of the two lovers seeking each other, and all her prudence returned.

"*Pardieu*, monsieur," she said dryly, "you interfere in matters that hardly concern you, and it is my opinion that all my ideas would be better left unsaid before you; but since you persist in hearing them, and Monsieur Antoine considers it very wise, I will tell you that I forbid you to repeat or even to believe what my girl just said in a burst of anger against your Galuchet. For all men are not cut on that pattern, thank God! and we don't need to have the world condemn her to remain single, just because she prefers a more agreeable husband. We will find one for her easily enough, never fear; and don't you imagine that, because she isn't rich like you, she will go begging."

"Come, come, Janille!" said Monsieur Antoine, taking Emile's hand, "you are the one who says things that shouldn't be said. It would seem that you wanted to wound our young friend. You shake your head too much. I tell you that he is our best friend next to Jean, who has the right of priority; and I declare that no one,

during the twenty years that, on account of my poverty, I have been in a way to appreciate disinterested sentiments, has shown me and inspired in me so much affection as Emile. That is why I say he will never be an embarrassment in our family secrets. By his common-sense, his education and the loftiness of his ideas, he is far ahead of his own age and ours. That is why we could find no better adviser. I look upon him as Gilberte's brother, and I will answer for it that, if a suitable husband for her should present himself, he would enlighten us concerning his character, and would exert himself to bring about a marriage that would make her happy, and to prevent one likely to do the contrary. So your sharp words have no common-sense, Janille. When I took him into my confidence, I knew what I was about; you treat me altogether too much like a child!"

"Ah indeed, monsieur! so you choose to pick a quarrel with me in your turn, do you?" said Janille, with great animation. "Very good! this is the day for truth-telling, and I will speak, since you drive me to the wall. I tell you and I tell Monsieur Emile, to his face, that he is much too young for this rôle of friend of the family, and that this friendship had better cool down a little, or you will feel the inconveniences of it. Why, here's an instance of it this very day, and you will find it out. A young man comes and offers to marry Gilberte: we won't have him—that's all right and fully understood; but what will prevent this discarded suitor from believing and saying—if for no other reason than to be revenged—that it is because of Monsieur Emile and of the family ambition to make a rich marriage, that we will listen to nobody else? I don't say that Monsieur Emile is capable of having such thoughts, I am sure he is not. He

knows us well enough to know what sort of people we are. But fools will believe it and the consequence will be that we shall be thought fools. What? we turn Monsieur Galuchet away because our girl is thought to be too young, and Monsieur Cardonnet the younger will come here every week, as if he were the only one excepted from the rule! That can never be, Monsieur Antoine! And it's of no use for you to look at me with your soft eyes, Monsieur Emile, and to kneel by me and take my hands as if you were going to make me a declaration; I love you, yes I admit it, and I shall regret you much; but I shall do my duty all the same, as I am the only one in this house with any head and foresight and decision! Yes, my boy, you must go, too, for *ma mie* Janille isn't in her dotage yet."

Gilberte had become pale as a lily again and Monsieur Antoine was angry, probably for the first time in his life. He thought Janille unreasonable, and, as he dared not rise in revolt, he pulled Sacripant's ear, who, seeing that he was out of temper, overwhelmed him with caresses and submitted to be tortured by his unconscious hand. Emile was on his knees between Janille and Gilberte; his heart overflowed and he could not keep silent.

"My dear Janille," he cried at last, with impetuous emotion, "and you, noble and generous Antoine, listen to me and learn my secret at last. I love your daughter, I have loved her passionately since the first day that I saw her, and if she deigns to share my feelings, I ask her in marriage, not for Monsieur Galuchet, not for any protégé of my father, not for any of my friends, but for myself, who cannot live away from her, and who will not rise except with her consent and yours."

"Come to my heart!" cried Monsieur Antoine, in a transport of joy and enthusiasm; "for you are a noble

fellow and I knew that nothing could be truer and more loyal than your heart."

He pressed the slender youth in his arms as if he would have suffocated him. Janille, deeply moved, put her handkerchief to her eyes; but in an instant she forced back her tears and said:

"This is madness, Monsieur Antoine, genuine madness! Keep watch on yourself and don't let your heart go so fast. Certainly he is a fine fellow, and if we were rich or if he were poor, we could never make a better choice; but we must not forget that what he proposes is impossible, that his family will never consent to it, and that he has been building a romance in his little brain. If I didn't love you so much, Emile, I would scold you for inflaming Monsieur Antoine's imagination so, for it is younger still than yours, and is capable of taking your dreams seriously. Luckily his daughter is more sensible than he and I are. She is not at all disturbed by your soft words. She is grateful to you for them and thanks you for your kind intentions; but she is perfectly well aware that you don't belong to yourself and can't dispense with your father's consent; and that, even if you were old enough to summon him into court to make him consent, she is too well born to care to enter by force a family that spurned her."

"That is true," said Monsieur Antoine, as if waking from a dream; "we are going astray, my poor children; Monsieur Cardonnet will never have anything to do with us, for we have nothing to offer him but a name which he would treat as a chimera, which, indeed, we hold too cheap ourselves, and which throws open no road to fortune. Emile, Emile, let us say no more about it, for it would become a source of regret. Let us be friends, friends forever! be my child's brother, her protector and

defender if occasion offers; but let us say nothing
marriage or love, for, in these times we live in, lo
dream and marriage a business affair."

"You do not know me," cried Emile, "if you
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the scheming of self-interest! I will not deceive
would answer for my mother if she were free, I
father will not be favorably disposed to this ma
And yet my father loves me, and when he has
the force and endurance of my will he will reali
his own will cannot carry the day in this matter.
is one means that he can try to compel me to
He can deprive me for a time of the enjoyments
wealth. But in that case how joyfully I will wor
der to deserve Gilberte's hand, to raise myself
level, to deserve the esteem which is not accorded
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honorable tests, as you have, Monsieur Antoin
father will yield some day, I have no doubt; I c
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more than ambition and wealth, will open his a
his heart unreservedly to my bride. For I k
father well enough to know that when he yield
power of destiny, he does it without a backward
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Therefore believe in my love, O my friends, an
I do on God's help. There is nothing humiliatin
in the prejudices I shall have to combat, and th
my mother, who lives only for me and in me, w
up to Gilberte in secret for my father's tempora

dice. Oh! do not doubt it, do not doubt it, I implore you! Faith can do anything, and if you help me in this fight, I shall be the luckiest mortal who ever fought for the holiest of all causes, for a noble love, and for a woman worthy of my whole life's devotion!"

"Ta! ta! ta!" exclaimed Janille, bewildered by his eloquence; "here he is talking like a book and trying to excite my girl's brain. Will you be kind enough to keep quiet, golden tongue? we do not want to listen to you, and we refuse to believe you. I forbid you, Monsieur Antoine! You don't realize all the misfortunes this may bring on us, and the least would be to prevent Gilberte's making a possible, reasonable marriage."

Poor Antoine no longer knew which way to turn. When Emile spoke, he glowed with the memory of his youthful years, and remembered that he too had loved; nothing seemed to be nobler and holier than to defend the cause of love and to encourage such a noble enterprise. But when Janille threw water on the fire, he recognized his mentor's wisdom and prudence. Thus, sometimes he took part with her against Emile, sometimes with Emile against her.

"We have had enough of this," said Janille, vexed because she saw no apparent end to their irresolution; "all this ought not to be discussed before my child. What would be the result if she were a weak or frivolous creature? Luckily she does not bite at your fairy tales, and as she cares very little for your money she will have too keen a sense of dignity to wait until you're at liberty to dispose of your heart. She will dispose of hers as she thinks best, and while she continues to give you her esteem and friendship, she will beg you not to compromise her by your visits. Come, Gilberte, say a sensible, brave word to put an end to all this foolish talk!"

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actually loves him and has told him so, and tells him so again before us! Oh! it was a wretched day for us that this young man entered our house!"

Antoine, utterly overwhelmed, could do nothing but burst into tears, pressing his daughter to his heart. But Emile, inspired by Gilberte's courage, found so much to say, that he succeeded in taking possession of that mind, incapable as it was of defending itself. Even Janille herself was shaken, and they ended by adopting the plan which the lovers themselves had formed at Crozant, namely, to wait—a plan which did not decide much to Janille's satisfaction—and not to meet too often—which, at all events, reassured her to some slight extent as to the danger from without.

They left the orchard, and a few moments later Galuchet also left it, but stealthily, and, without being seen, plunged into the bushes to make his way, under cover, to the Gargilesse road.

Emile remained to dinner, for neither Antoine nor Janille had the courage to shorten a visit which was not to be repeated until the following week.

The worthy country gentleman's affectionate and ingenuous heart was unable to resist the caresses and loving speeches of the two children, and when Janille's back was turned, he allowed himself to be prevailed upon to share their hopes and to bless their love. Janille tried to hold out against them, and her depression was genuine and profound; but no one can arrange a plan of seduction so cunningly as two lovers who desire to win over a friend to their cause. They were both so kind, so attentive, so affectionate, so ingenious in their cajoling flatteries, and above all, so beautiful, with their eyes and foreheads illumined by the glow of enthusiasm, that a tiger could not have resisted. Janille wept, at first with

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I breathe again and I feel nothing but the joy of living for you and with you. And didn't you see this evening how happy we all were to be able to love one another without fear or shame? Do you think that it will ever be different, and that Emile and I would be happy together if you were not with us always and every minute?"

"Alas!" thought Janille with a sigh, "we are only at the very beginning of this fine arrangement!"

XXVI

THE SNARE

Emile determined to delay no longer to speak seriously to his father, and to make, not a formal and too hasty avowal of his love, but a sort of preliminary discourse which would lead little by little to more decisive explanations. But the carpenter had made an appointment with him for the following morning, and he thought, justly enough, that if that man proved what he had asserted, he would have an excellent pretext for broaching the subject, and for demonstrating to Monsieur Cardonnet the uncertainty and vanity of his plans for making a fortune.

Not that Emile placed blind faith in Jean Jappeloup's competence to form an opinion in such matters; but he knew that the observation of a natural logician may materially assist scientific investigation, and he set out before dawn to join his companion at a certain point where

they had agreed to meet. He had informed Monsieur Cardonnet the night before of his purpose to examine the course of the stream that ran the factory, but without telling him whom he had chosen for his guide.

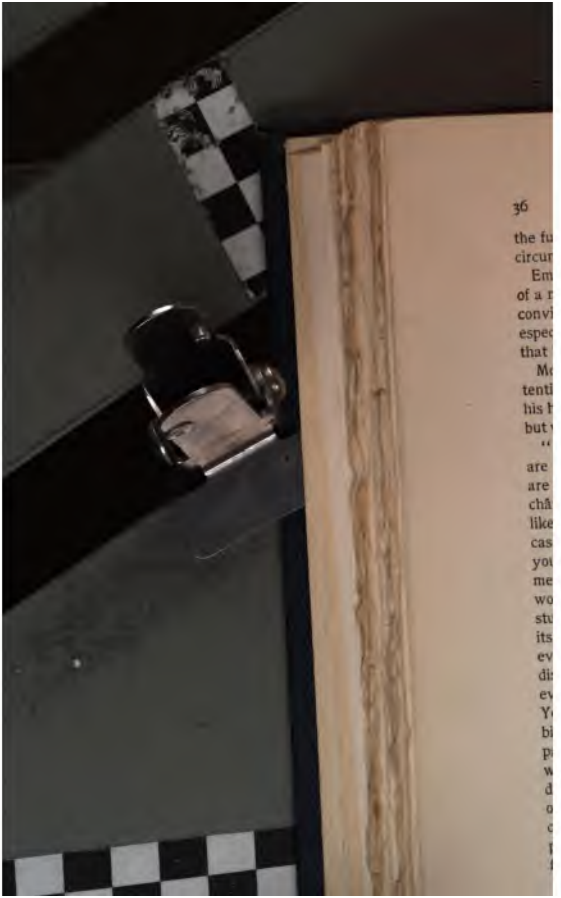
It was a difficult but interesting excursion, and on his return Emile requested a private interview with his father. He found him with a tranquil air of triumph, which seemed to him not to be of very good augury. However, as he deemed it his duty to inform him of what he had seen, he entered upon the subject without hesitation.

"You urge me, father," he began, "to espouse your projects and to take hold of them with the same ardor that you yourself display. I have done my best, for some time past, to place at your service all the application of which my brain is capable; I owe it therefore to the confidence you have placed in me to tell you that we are building on sand, and that, instead of doubling your fortune, you are rapidly throwing it into a bottomless pit."

"What do you mean, Emile?" replied Monsieur Cardonnet with a smile; "this is a very alarming exordium, and I supposed that science would have led you to the same result that practice shows—namely, that nothing is impossible to enlightened determination. It seems that you have deduced from your meditations a contrary solution. Let us see! you have made a long trip and doubtless a very thorough examination? I too explored last year the stream which it is our business to subdue, and I am certain of success; what do you say to that, boy?"

"I say that you will fail, father, because it will require an outlay beyond the means of a private individual, and which is not likely to be retrieved by proportionate profit."

With that, Emile, with much lucidity, entered upon explanations which we will spare the reader, but which tended to prove that the course of the Gargilesse presented natural obstacles impossible to overcome without an outlay ten times as great as Monsieur Cardonnet anticipated. It would be necessary for him to become the owner of a considerable part of the bed of the stream, in order to divert its course in one place, widen it in another, and in another, blast out ledges that interfered with the regularity of its flow; and finally, if he could not do away with the accumulation and sudden and violent overflow of the water in the upper reservoirs, he would have to build dikes around the factory a hundred times more extensive than those already begun, which dikes would then throw the water back in such quantities as to ruin the surrounding land; and, in order to do that, he would have to buy half of the commune or wield an oppressive power, impossible to obtain in France. The works already constructed by Monsieur Cardonnet were a serious detriment to the millers thereabout. The water, being arrested in its course for his use, made their mills *walk backward,* as they said in the province, producing a contrary current against their wheels, which stopped them entirely at certain hours. Not without compensating them in another way and at great expense, had he succeeded hitherto in pacifying these small manufacturers, pending the time when he would ruin them or ruin himself; for the compensation offered could be temporary only and was to cease with the completion of his works. He had bought at a high price, from one, his services for six months as a carter, from others, the use of their horses to draw his barges. He had soothed a goodly number with illusory promises, and the simple-minded people, dazzled by a temporary profit, had closed their eyes to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more experienced than you. See, here is a plan of the whole locality, with the levels, measurements and depths of water. Let us look it over together."

Emile examined the plan with care and discovered several actual mistakes. They had considered it impossible that the water should reach a certain elevation even in extraordinary freshets, and that certain barriers could hold it in check beyond a certain number of hours. They had figured on contingencies, and the commonest experience, the testimony of any witness of what had happened theretofore, would have sufficed to destroy the theory, if they had been willing to listen to that evidence. But that was something that Cardonnet's proud and distrustful nature could not do. He had placed himself at the mercy of the elements, with his eyes closed, like Napoléon in the Russian campaign, and in his superb obstinacy he would willingly have undertaken, like Xerxes, to whip the rebellious Neptune into submission. His adviser, although a very clever man, had thought of nothing but encouraging his ambition, or had allowed himself to be swayed and influenced by that ardent will.

"Father," said Emile, "this is not simply a matter of hydrographic calculations, and you will allow me to say that your absolute confidence in the work of a specialist has led you astray. You laughed at me when, at the beginning of my general studies, I said to you that all branches of human knowledge seemed to me to be interrelated, and that one must needs know almost everything to be infallible on any given point; in a word, that no special work could dispense with synthesis, and that before learning the mechanism of a watch it would be well to learn the mechanism of creation. You laughed at me—you laugh at me still—and you took me away

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here shall carry it away again or bring some of its friends for company.'"

"Bravo! Emile, nothing could be more ingenious."

"And nothing more certain, father."

"Where did you learn all this, pray? Are you hydrographer, mechanician, astronomer, geologist, physicist and botanist all at once?"

"No, father; you compelled me to pick up on the wing the elements of those sciences, which have a common foundation; but there are some privileged natures in which observation and logic take the place of learning."

"You are not modest."

"I am not speaking of myself, father, but of a peasant, a true genius, who doesn't know how to read, who doesn't know the names of the fluids, gases, minerals or plants, but who understands causes and effects, whose keen eye and infallible memory detect differences and characteristics; of a man, in short, who, while speaking the language of a child, showed me all these things and made them clear to me."

"Who is this unknown genius whom you met on your walk, I pray to know?"

"A man whom you do not like, father, whom you take for a madman, and whose name I hardly dare mention to you."

"Ah! I understand! it is your friend Jappeloup the carpenter, Monsieur de Boisguilbault's vagabond, the village sorcerer, who cures sprains with words and puts out fires by cutting a cross on a beam with his axe."

Monsieur Cardonnet, who had thus far listened to his son with interest, albeit without being persuaded, laughed scornfully, and was thenceforth inclined to treat the subject with sarcasm and contempt.

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the Gauls shed human blood. He absolutely insisted on carrying it off for the departmental museum. He took all the granite drinking-troughs for ancient sarcophagi. And that is how the most absurd errors spread. It rested entirely with me whether a trough or a mortar should pass for venerable monuments. And yet that gentleman had passed fifty years of his life reading and meditating. Look out for yourself, Emile, a day may come when you will take bladders for lanterns!"

"I have done my duty," said Emile. "I was bound to urge you to make a further examination of the spots I have visited, and it seemed to me that the experience of your recent disaster might suggest the same advice. But as you answer me with jests I have nothing more to say."

"Let us see, Emile," said Monsieur Cardonnet after a few moments' reflection, "what your conclusion is from all this, and what there is at the bottom of your cheerful predictions. I understand very well that Master Jean Jappeloup, who has set himself up as an inveterate foe of my undertaking, and who passes his life declaiming against *Père Cardonnet*—even in your presence, and you could tell me many things about him—would like to persuade you to induce me to leave this country where, it appears, my presence is a thorn in his side. But whither do you seek to lead me, O my philosopher and scientist? Where do you wish to found a colony? into what American desert do you propose to carry the advantages of your socialism and my industrial talent?"

"We might carry them not so far away," replied Emile, "and if you were seriously inclined to work at the civilization of savages, you would find plenty under your hand; but I know only too well, father, that it is no part of your purpose to return to a subject that has been

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shall not escape me. Come, Emile, you must make up your mind. If, after the renewed and thorough examination we propose to make, science and observation decide that Master Jappeloup and you are not infallible, that the factory can be finished and have a prosperous existence, that my fortune and yours are planted here, and that they must germinate and fructify here, will you agree to embrace my projects body and soul, to second me in every way, with arms and brain, with heart and head? Swear to me that you will belong to me, that you will have no other thought than that of helping me to make you rich; place all your faculties at my disposal without argument; and in return I swear to you that I will give your heart and your passions all the gratification which it lies in my power to do, and which the laws of morality do not forbid. I believe that I make myself clear?"

"O father!" cried Emile, rising impetuously, "have you weighed your words?"

"They are carefully weighed, and I wish you to weigh your reply."

"I hardly understand you," said Emile, falling back upon his chair. A cloud of flame had passed before his eyes; he felt as if he were about to faint.

"Emile, do you wish to marry?" rejoined Monsieur Cardonnet, eager to make the most of his emotion.

"Yes, father, I do," Emile replied, leaning over the table that stood between them and putting out his hands imploringly. "Oh! do not play with me now, for you would kill me!"

"Do you doubt my word?"

"I cannot, if your word is given seriously."

"It is the most serious promise I have ever given in my life, as you can judge for yourself. You have a noble heart and an eminent mind; I know it and I have

proofs of it. But with equal sincerity and equa
tainty, I can tell you that your brain is both too
and too active, and that twenty years hence, perh
always perhaps, Emile—you will not be competi
take care of yourself. You will be constantly att
by vertigo, you will never act coolly, you will take
passionately, for or against men and things, withou
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the indispensable instinct of self-preservation to ap
you and warn you from the depths of your consc
You have a poetic nature; it would be useless for
try to deceive myself in that respect, for everythin
me to the painful certainty that you need a guide
master. Bless God, therefore, who has given y
your guide and master a father, your best friend.
you as you are, although you are just the oppo
what I should have liked, could I have chosen m
I love you as I would love my daughter if nature h
made a mistake in your sex; that is enough to te
that I love you passionately. So do not complain o
fate and never let my reproaches humiliate you.
present position with regard to each other, wh
clearly defined now to my mind, I will make im
sacrifices to your happiness and your future; I wi
come my repugnance, which is very great, I confe
I will allow you to marry the illegitimate daught
nobleman and his servant. I will satisfy your he
your passions, as I have said; but only on the co
that your mind is to belong to me absolutely then
and that I am to dispose of you as freely as of m

"O my God! is it possible!" exclaimed Em
zled and terrified at the same time; "but what
intend by this renunciation of self, father, what
do you give to it?"

"Didn't I just tell you? Don't pretend that you can't understand me. Look you, Emile, I know the whole of your Châteaubrun romance, and I could repeat it to you word for word, from your arrival one stormy night down to the Crozant expedition, and from Crozant down to your conversation last Saturday in Monsieur Antoine's orchard. I know all the characters now as well as you do yourself, for I chose to see with my own eyes, and yesterday, while you were exploring the banks of the stream, I went to Châteaubrun, on the pretext of supporting Constant Galuchet's offer of marriage, and I talked a long while with Mademoiselle Gilberte."

"With her, father?"

"Isn't it perfectly natural that I should want to know the young woman you have chosen without consulting me, and who may perhaps be my daughter some day?"

"O father! father!"

"I found her charming, lovely, modest, humble and proud at once, able to express herself well, lacking neither deportment, good manners nor education, and common sense less than all! She refused with much propriety the suitor I proposed to her. Yes, with gentleness, modesty and dignity combined. I was very well pleased with her! What struck me most was her prudence, her reserve, and the perfect control she has over herself; for I confess that I tried to sting her a little, and even to offend her, to get a sight at the under side of her character. Her father was away; but the mother, that sly little old woman whose son-in-law you aspire to be, was so irritated by my reflections on her small fortune and the perfect suitability of a marriage with Galuchet, that she treated me with contempt; she called me *bourgeois;* and as I persisted, for the express purpose of pushing her to extremities, she said to me, with her arms akimbo, that her

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and that rôle of menial would outrage nature. No, no, this is no time to throw dust in my eyes, and I am not the man to make any mistake as to your real intentions. I am not yet so nearly ruined that I can't afford to hire an overseer, and I do not think that I could select one less fitted than you to manage workmen. I want you to be another myself, to help me in the work of planning, to learn for me, to give me your ideas, subject to my right to combat and modify them; in a word, to seek out and invent methods of money-making which I will carry out when they suit me. In this way your constant studies and your fertile imagination can assist me in multiplying your fortune by ten. But to obtain this result, Emile, there must be no working with indifference and absence of interest, as you have been doing for a fortnight past. I am not deceived by this temporary submission, concerted with Gilberte, to extort my consent. I require submission for your whole life. I wish you to be ready to undertake journeys—with your wife, if you please—to examine the progress of the manufacturing industry; in a word, I want you to sign, not on paper before a notary, but on my head and with your heart's blood, and before God, a contract which will wipe out your whole past of dreams and chimeras, and which will pledge your convictions, your will, your faith, your devotion, your religion, your whole future, to the success of my work."

"And suppose I do not believe in your work?" said Emile, turning pale.

"You must believe in it; or, if it is impracticable, let me be the first to cease to believe in it. But do not think to escape me by that détour. If we are forced to strike our tent here, I shall pitch it somewhere else, and I shall not stop until I die. Wherever I may be, whatever I may

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XXVII

SORROWS AND JOYS OF LOVE

Emile locked himself in his room and passed two hours there, a prey to the most violent agitation. The thought of possessing Gilberte without a struggle, without resistance, without the terrible distress of breaking his father's heart, which he had hitherto anticipated with dismay and horror, intoxicated him completely. But suddenly the thought of degrading himself in his own eyes by an unholy oath plunged him into bitter despair; and between these alternatives of joy and anguish he could make up his mind to nothing. Should he dare to go and throw himself at Gilberte's feet and confess everything to her? He could count upon her courage and grandeur of soul. But should he fulfill the duties imposed upon him by his love, if, instead of concealing from her the terrible sacrifice that he might make without a word, he should compel her to bear half of his remorse and his suffering? Had he not said to her a hundred times at Crozant, that, for her and to obtain her hand, he would submit to anything and would recoil at nothing? But he had not then foreseen that his father's infernal genius would appeal to the very force of his love to corrupt and ruin his soul, and he found that he had received an unforeseen blow which had disarmed and bewildered him. Twenty times he was on the point of returning to Monsieur Cardonnet, to ask him to give him his word that he would do nothing, that he would conceal from the family at Châteaubrun

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that he seized upon that pretext to break his word, and she would banish him from Châteaubrun with anger. Who could say that she would not in time work upon Gilberte's mind so successfully that Gilberte would share her scorn and indignation?

Feeling that he lacked strength to face so cruel a test, Emile tried to write to Gilberte. He began and destroyed twenty letters, and at last, being utterly unable to solve the problem of his situation, he resolved to go and open his heart to his old friend Monsieur de Boisguilbault, and ask his advice.

Meanwhile, Monsieur Cardonnet, acting with all the energy and freedom of his cruel inspiration, wrote Gilberte a letter thus conceived:

"Mademoiselle,

"You must have found me very troublesome and far from polite yesterday. I write to ask your pardon and to confess to a little feint for which you will forgive me, I am sure, when you know my intentions.

"My son loves you, mademoiselle, I know, and I also know that you deign to reciprocate his sentiments. I am happy and proud that it is so, now that I know you. Does it not seem natural to you that, before forming a decision of the utmost importance, I desired to see with my own eyes, and in a certain measure to test the character of the young woman who has in her hands my son's heart and the future of my family?

"And so, mademoiselle, I write to-day to apologize at your feet, and to say to you that one so lovely and amiable as you can dispense with many things, even with fortune, when it is a question of entering a rich and honorable family.

"I ask your permission, therefore, to call upon you

once more in order to lay before your father in due
my petition for your hand, in my son's behalf, as soo
my son shall have fully authorized me to do so.
last sentence demands an explanation, and that exp
tion should properly find a place in this letter.

"I make my consent to my son's happiness depe
upon a single condition, and that condition tends o
make his happiness more complete and to assure it
tinuance indefinitely. I demand that he abandon
eccentric opinions which would impair our good
standing and would endanger his fortune and cons
tion in the future. I am sure that you are too se
and too intelligent to understand the socialistic, le
doctrines, with the aid of which my dear Emile a
young friends expect to overturn the world in a
time; that the stock phrases of the brotherhood o
kind, equal participation in privileges and enjoy
and many other technical terms of the young c
nistic school are absolutely unintelligible to you.
that Emile has never bored you to death with his
sophical declamations, and I find it hard to belie
he could have obtained the happiness of winnin
affection by that nonsense. I have no doubt that
consent to abstain from it forever and to renounce h
At that price, provided that he gives me the promis
but solemnly, I will consent with all my heart
the fortunate choice that he has made of a perfect
like yourself. Be kind enough, mademoiselle, to
to monsieur your father my deep regret at not see
and to inform him of the contents of this letter.

"Pray accept the sentiments of esteem and of
affection with which I place my son's cause and
in your hands."

"VICTOR CARDON

While a servant in gold lace, mounted on a fine horse, carried this letter to Châteaubrun, Emile, over-burdened with anxious care, betook himself on foot to the park of Boisguilbault.

"Well," said the marquis, squeezing his hand hard, "I did not expect you until next Sunday. I thought that you forgot me yesterday, so this is a pleasant surprise. I thank you, Emile. The days are very long since you have been working so faithfully for your father. I can only approve your submission, although I ask myself with some little alarm if it will not take you farther along with him and his principles than you think. But what's the matter, Emile? You are pale, distressed. You haven't had a fall from your horse, have you?"

"I came on foot; but I have had a worse fall," replied Emile, "and I believe that I have come to die here. Listen to me, my friend. I have come to ask you either for the strength to die or the secret of life. An insane joy and a ghastly sorrow are fighting together in my poor heart, in my tortured brain. I have had, ever since I knew you, a secret which I could not, dared not tell you, but which I cannot keep to myself to-day. I do not know whether you will understand it, whether there is within you any chord that will sympathize with my suffering; but I know that you love me, that you are wise and enlightened, and that you adore justice. It is impossible that you should not give me salutary advice."

Thereupon, the young man confided to the old man his whole story, abstaining carefully from mentioning any name, place, or incident which could possibly lead him to suspect that he was referring to Gilberte and her family. He dreaded the effect of the marquis's personal prejudices, and, desiring that his judgment should not be influenced in any way, he so expressed himself as to

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is broken forever, and that I am struggling against a strange master, who oppresses me, who weighs on my heart like an enemy, like a ghost! Ah! I remember a dream I had the first night I passed in this neighborhood. I dreamed that my father came and sat on me to suffocate me!—It was horrible; and now that ghastly vision is being realized; my father has placed his knees, his elbows, his feet on my breast; he is trying to tear out my conscience or my heart. He is poking about in my entrails to see what weak spot will give way to him. Oh! it is a devilish invention, a murderous project, which leads him astray. Is it possible that love of gold and worship of success can inspire such thoughts in a father's mind against his child? If you had seen the smile of triumph with which he displayed the sudden inspiration of his peculiar generosity! he was not a protector and adviser, but an adversary who has set a trap and seizes his foe with a fiendish laugh. 'Choose,' he seemed to say, 'and if you die, what does it matter? I shall have triumphed.'—O my God! it is horrible, horrible, to condemn and to hate one's father!"

And poor Emile, crushed by grief, laid his face on the grass on which he was lying and watered it with burning tears.

"Emile," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, "you can neither hate your father nor be false to your mistress. Tell me, do you set much store by the truth? Can you lie?"

The marquis had touched the right spot. Emile sprang to his feet impetuously.

"No, monsieur, no," he said, "you know that I cannot lie. And of what use is falsehood to cowards? What happiness, what repose can it assure them? If I swear to my father that I have changed my religion, that I be-

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is the world governed to-day, pray tell me? Upon what does the social structure rest? One must needs be very strong, Emile, to protest against it; for when you do, you must make up your mind to be sacrificed."

"Ah! if I were the only victim of my sacrifice," said the young man sorrowfully; "but *she!* poor, saint-like creature, must she be sacrificed too?"

"Tell me, Emile, if she should advise you to lie, would you still love her?"

"I don't know! I think so! Can I imagine a state of things in which I should not love her, since I love her now?"

"You really love her, I see. Alas! I too have loved!"

"Tell me, then, if you would have sacrificed honor?"

"Perhaps so, if I had been loved."

"Oh! feeble creatures that we are!" cried Emile. "God help me! shall I not find a counsellor, a guide, a help in my distress? Will no one give me strength? Strength, O my God! I implore it on my knees; and never have I prayed with greater faith and ardor: I beseech Thee, give me strength!"

The marquis went to Emile and pressed him to his heart. Tears were rolling down his cheeks; but he held his peace and did not help him.

Emile wept a long time on his breast and felt that he loved that man whom each succeeding test revealed to him as an extremely sensitive rather than really strong man. He loved him the more for it, but he grieved that he did not find in him the energetic and powerful adviser upon whom he had counted in his weakness. He left him at nightfall and the marquis said nothing more to him than: "Come again to-morrow; I must know what you decide upon. I shall not sleep until I see you in a calmer frame of mind."

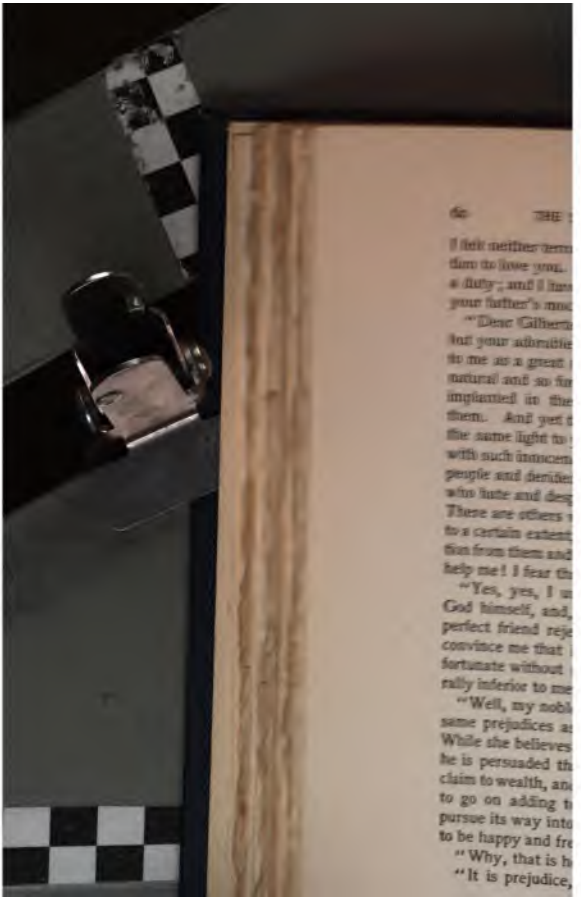
"Apparently," replied Gilberte, abandoning her hand to him, which he pressed against his lips, "it was because you divined in me a heart created to assist you."

"Very good; and can you tell me, my only love, my only treasure on this earth, why your heart gave itself to me?"

"Yes, I can tell you, my dear; because you seemed to me, from the very first day, noble, generous, simple-hearted, humane, in a single word, good, which to my mind is the noblest quality a man can have."

"But there is a passive goodness which in some sort excludes nobility and generosity of sentiment, a yielding weakness, which may be a charming characteristic, but which, under difficult circumstances, compromises with duty and betrays the interests of mankind generally to spare itself and one or two others a little suffering?"

"I understand that, but I do not call weakness and fear goodness. To my mind there is no true goodness without courage, dignity and, above all, devotion to duty. If I esteem you to the point of saying to you, without suspicion and without shame, that I love you, Emile, it is because I know that you are great in heart and mind; it is because you pity the unfortunate and think only of assisting them, because you despise nobody, because you suffer when others suffer, because you would gladly give everything that belongs to you, even your blood, to relieve the poor and the abandoned. That is what I understood about you as soon as you talked before me and with me; and that is why I said to myself: "This heart answers mine; these noble thoughts exalt my soul and confirm me in all that I have thought; I detect in this mind, which impresses me and charms me, a light which I am compelled to follow and which guides me toward God himself. That is why, Emile,



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custom. I cannot condemn my father; but tell me—when he asks me to swear that I will espouse his errors, that I will share his passionate ambition and his arrogant intolerance—ought I to obey him? And if your hand is to be had only at that price, if I hesitate an instant, if a profound terror takes possession of me, if I fear that I may become unworthy of you by denying my belief in the future of mankind, do I not deserve some pity from you, some encouragement, or some consolation?"

"O *mon Dieu!*" said Gilberte, clasping her hands, "you do not understand what is happening to us, Emile! Your father does not wish us ever to be married, and his conduct is full of cunning and shrewdness. He knows well enough that you cannot change your heart and brain as one changes his coat or his horse; and be sure that he would despise you himself, that he would be in despair if he should obtain what he asks. No, no, he knows you too well to believe it, Emile, and he has but little fear of it; but he attains his end all the same. He separates you from me, he tries to make trouble between us, he puts himself in the right and you in the wrong. But he will not succeed, Emile; no, I swear it; your resistance to his demands will increase my affection for you. Ah! yes, I understand it all; but I am above such a paltry stratagem, and nothing shall ever part us."

"O my Gilberte, O my blessed angel!" cried Emile, "tell me what I shall do; I belong to you absolutely. If you bid me, I will bend my neck under the yoke; I will commit all manner of iniquities, all manner of crimes for you."

"I hope not," rejoined Gilberte, mildly yet proudly, "for I should no longer love you if you ceased to be yourself, and I will have no husband whom I cannot respect. Tell your father, Emile, that I will never give

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could not believe that this would happen! I cannot believe it yet!"

"O my dear Emile! do not be weak when I need all my strength. You have sworn to overcome your father's opposition, and you will do it. Here is one of his most tremendous efforts which we have defeated already. He was very sure beforehand that you would not accept dishonor, and he thinks that you will be discouraged so easily! He doesn't know you. You will persist in loving me, and in telling him so, and in proving it to him every day. Come, the hardest part of it is over, since he knows all, and, instead of being indignant and grieved, he accepts the battle with a smile, like a game of cards in which he believes himself the more skilful. So have courage; I will have plenty of it. Do not forget that our union is the work of several years of perseverance and faithful toil. Adieu, Emile, I hear my father's voice coming nearer and I must fly. Stay here, and do not go on until we are well out of the way."

"To see you no more!" murmured Emile; "to hear your voice no more, and still have courage?"

"If you lack courage, Emile, it will be because you do not love me as much as I love you, and because our union does not promise happiness enough to induce you to fight hard and long."

"Oh! I will have courage!" cried Emile, conquered by the noble-hearted girl's energy. "I will force myself to suffer and to wait. You will see, Gilberte, whether the happiness the future promises does not enable me to endure everything in the present. But can we not meet sometimes, by chance, as we met to-day, for instance?"

"Who knows," said Gilberte. "Let us rely on Providence."

"But one can sometimes assist Providence. Can we

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father must have detained him. Let us hurry back; I'll wager that he's there." And the goodman confidently quickened his pace.

Janille was in a savage humor. She could not understand Emile's moderation, and was beginning to be seriously disturbed. Gilberte tried to divert her thoughts, and during supper was calm and almost cheerful. But she was no sooner alone in her room than she fell on her knees and buried her face in the bed, to stifle the sobs which shook her frame.

XXVIII

CONSOLATION

Gilberte was resigned, albeit in despair. Emile was perhaps less desperate, because in the bottom of his heart he was not yet resigned. Every moment his uncertainty returned, and the greater and more worthy of his love Gilberte appeared to him in the light of their conversation, the more intensely did that love make its invincible power felt. As he was entering the village, he turned abruptly and retraced his steps, trying to fancy that he was going to Châteaubrun; and when he had walked a few minutes, he sat down on a rock, covered his face with his hands, and felt weaker, more in love, more human than ever.

"If Monsieur de Boisguilbault had seen her and heard her," he said to himself, "he would understand that I cannot hesitate between her and myself, and that I must

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looking for you, f
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for it is late. You can tell me on the way how your father, whom I believed to be a madman, suddenly made up his mind to be sensible."

"My father is mad, in very truth," said Emile, taking the carpenter's arm and walking excitedly beside him; "altogether mad! for he gives his consent on condition that I tell him a lie which he will not believe. But it is a triumph to him, a genuine delight, to induce me to lie!"

"Look here," said Jappeloup, "you've not been drinking? No, you never drink too much! and yet you are crazy. They say that love makes one as drunk as wine; it must be true, for you say things without rhyme or reason."

"My father, who is mad," continued Emile, beside himself with excitement, "wants to make me mad too, and he is succeeding finely, as you see! He wants me to tell him that two and two make five, and to take my oath to it before him. I consent, you see! What harm does it do to flatter his mania, so long as I marry Gilberte?"

"I don't like all this business, Emile," said the carpenter. "I don't understand it, and it annoys me. If you are mad, I don't propose that Gilberte shall marry you. Let us stop here and try to collect our wits a little. I have no desire to take you to Châteaubrun, if you are going to ramble in this way, my son."

"Jean, I feel very ill," said Emile, sitting down again; "I am dizzy. Try to understand me, to calm me, to help me to understand myself. You know that I don't think as my father does. Well, my father insists that I shall think as he does; that's the whole story! That is impossible; but so long as I say the same things that he does, what difference does it make?"

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Emile shed tears, which relieved him, and, recovering his self-possession, he explained more clearly to the carpenter what had taken place between his father and himself.

Jean listened with his eyes on the ground; then, after reflecting for a long time, he took the young man's hand, saying:

"Emile, you mustn't tell these lies; they are unworthy of a man. I see that your father is more crafty than crazy, and that he won't be satisfied with two or three vague words, such as we sometimes say to soothe a man who has drunk too much and whom we treat like a child. Your father, when you have lied to him, or made promises that you can't keep, won't let you breathe, and if you try to become a man again he will say: 'Remember, that you're nobody now?' He is proud and hard; I know it well. He won't give you one day a week to think in your own way, and, more than that, he will make your wife unhappy. I can see it all: he will make you blush before her, and he will play his cards so well that she will finally blush for you. To the devil with all lies and words you don't mean! None of that, Emile; I forbid it."

"But Gilberte?"

"Gilberte will say as I do, and so will Antoine and Janille. *Ma mie* Janille can say what she pleases. For my part, I don't propose that you shall lie. There's no Gilberte who could make me lie."

"Then I must give her up—not see her any more?"

"That is a misfortune," said Jean, firmly; "but when misfortune is upon us, we must bear it. Go and see Monsieur de Boisguilbault; he will say the same as I do, for, according to all you have told me of him, he is a man who takes a just view of things and whose ideas are good."

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the best-oiled tongue. As for Gilberte, be sure that she will have a kindly feeling for you all her life, and that she will think well of you for your straightforwardness. She will never love any other man, I promise you! I know her; she's a girl who has only one word. But the time will come when your father will change his tune. That will be when he is unhappy in his turn, and I have already prophesied that time would come."

"He doesn't believe it."

"Have you told him what I think about his factory?"

"I was bound to."

"You did wrong, but it's done now, and what must be will be. Come, Emile, let us go back to the village and to bed, for I see that you are shivering and I feel that you are feverish. Come, my boy, don't let your blood boil like this, and rely a little on the good Lord! I will go to Châteaubrun to-morrow morning; I will say what I have to say, and they will have to listen to me. I will answer for it that you won't have any falling out with them, at all events, for doing your duty."

"Good Jean! you do me a deal of good! you give me strength, and I feel better since you have been talking to me."

"Because I go straight to the point, you see, and don't embarrass myself with useless things."

"And you will go to Châteaubrun to-morrow? to-morrow? although it's a working day?"

"To-morrow, to be sure; as I work for nothing, I can begin my day at any time I please. Whom do you suppose I am going to work for to-morrow? Let's see you guess, Emile; there's something to divert your thoughts."

"I can't guess. For Monsieur Antoine?"

"No, Antoine hasn't much work to be done, poor fel-

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Jean succeeded in diverting Emile's thoughts, and almost in consoling him. That upright, bold, decided character had an excellent influence over him, and he went to bed with a more tranquil mind, after receiving his promise that he would let him know on the following evening how Gilberte's people felt toward him. Jean was confident of his ability to open their eyes concerning his conduct and Monsieur Cardonnet's. Sorrow makes us weak and trustful, and when our courage fails us, we can find nothing better to do than place our fate in the hands of an energetic and resolute person. If he does not solve the embarrassing problems of our position so easily as he flatters himself that he can do, at all events the contact with him strengthens and revivifies us; his confidence insensibly passes into us and makes us capable of assisting ourselves.

"This peasant, whom my father despises," thought Emile as he fell asleep, "this poor, ignorant, simple-hearted man has done me more good than Monsieur de Boisguilbault did; and when I asked God for an adviser, a support, a savior, He sent the poorest and humblest of His servants to mark out my duty in two words. Oh! what force the truth has in the mouths of those men whose instincts are upright and pure! and how profitless is all our knowledge compared with that of the heart! Father! father! more than ever I feel that you are blinded, and the lesson I have received from this peasant condemns you more than all the rest."

Although mentally more tranquil, Emile had a sharp attack of fever in the night. Amid the violent upheavals of the mind, we forget to care for and preserve the body. We allow ourselves to be exhausted by hunger, surprised

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occasional fits of distrust, and he had tried to make Emile fit in with his curious misanthropic theories, but he had not succeeded. After he had passed three days trying to persuade himself that idleness or curiosity had brought him this new guest, with the thirst for serious conversation and philosophical discussion, when he saw that amiable face, expansive and ingenuous in its fearless expression, appear in his solitude, he felt that hope appeared with it, and he surprised himself in the very act of loving, at the risk of being more unhappy than ever when doubt returned. In a word, after passing his whole life, especially the last twenty years, in guarding against emotions which he deemed himself incapable of sharing, he fell under their dominion, and could not endure the thought of being deprived of them.

He wandered, in feverish agitation, through all the avenues of his park, waited at all the gates, sighing with every step, starting at the slightest sound, and at last, depressed beyond measure by that silence and that solitude, heart-broken at the thought that Emile was contending with a sorrow which he could not lighten, he went out into the road and turned in the direction of Gargilesse, still hoping to see a black horse coming toward him.

It very rarely happened that Monsieur de Boisguilbault ventured to make such a rash sortie from the park, and he could not make up his mind to follow the beaten roads lest he should fall in with some face with which he was not familiar. So he walked as the crow flies, through the fields, without, however, losing sight of the road on which Emile was likely to be. He walked slowly, at a pace which might have been characterized as uncertain, but which the prudence and circumspection which marked his most trivial movements made firmer than it appeared.

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XXIX

AN ADVENTURE

The felling which offended Monsieur de Boisguilbault so deeply had been done on the bank of the little stream, and the slender poplars, the old willows and the majestic elms, falling in confusion, had formed a sort of bridge of verdure over that narrow current. While the oxen were dragging some of the trees with ropes to the carts that were to haul them away, the sturdy carpenter, running about on the trunks that blocked the stream, busied himself cutting away the tangled branches whose resistance neutralized the efforts of the cattle. Intent upon his task and zealous in the work of destruction of which his trade reaps the benefit, he exerted his skill and daring with a sort of frenzy. The river was deep and swift at that point, and Jean's post was so dangerous that no one else dared to share it with him. Running with a young man's lightness of foot and self possession to the flexible extremities of the trees that lay across the stream, he turned sometimes to cut the very branch on which he was balancing himself, and, when a loud cracking told him that his support was on the point of giving way under his feet, he would jump nimbly to a branch near by, electrified by the danger and the amazement of his comrades. His gleaming axe whirled in lightning flashes around his head, and his resonant voice stimulated the other workmen, surprised to find how simple was a task which the intelligence and energy of a single man directed, simplified and performed as by a miracle.

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and kept his coarse silvery locks flying about his forehead. With his pale face, his flashing eyes, his leathern apron, his tall thin figure, his bare arms brandishing the axe, he had the aspect of a Cyclops, on the sides of Mount Ætna, gathering wood to keep alight the fire of his infernal forge.

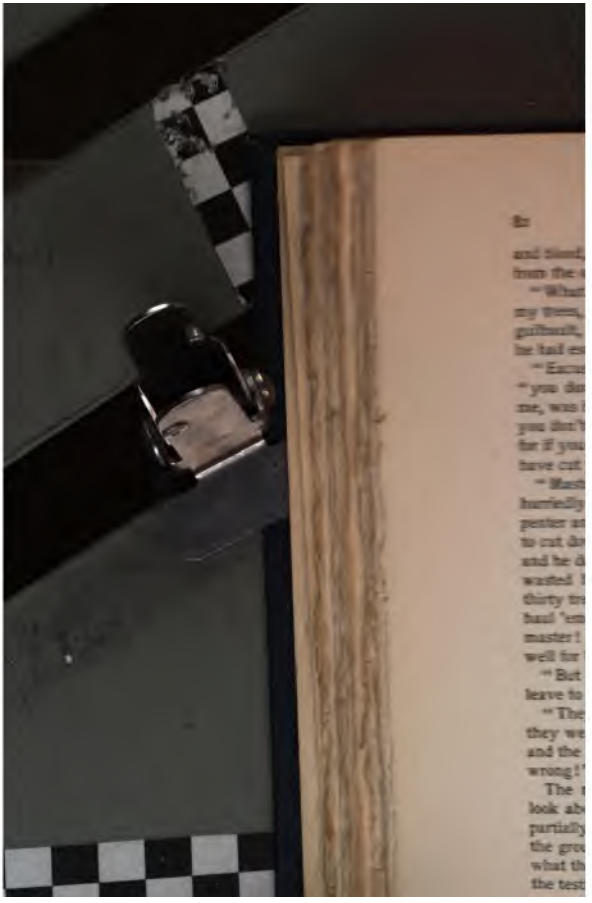
While the marquis exhausted his strength in unavailing cries, the carpenter, having cleared away the last obstacle, darted back to the round trunk of a young maple, with an address that would have done credit to a professional acrobat, leaped to the bank, and, seizing the draught-rope, was reinforcing the tired oxen with his exuberant muscular strength, when he felt upon his loins, covered with a coarse shirt only, the sting of Monsieur de Boisguilbault's flexible bamboo.

The carpenter thought that a branch had swung back against him, as often happened in such battles with verdure-clad boughs. He uttered a terrible oath, turned quickly and cut the marquis's cane in two with his axe, exclaiming:

"I guess that won't strike another man!"

He had no sooner pronounced this apostrophe of extermination, than his eyes, veiled by the excitement of toil, suddenly shone clear, and, by the glare of a vivid flash of lightning, he saw his benefactor standing before him, pale as a ghost. The marquis still held in his hand, which trembled with rage, the stump of his cane and its gold head. The stump was so short that it was plain that Jean had narrowly missed striking off the hand that was rashly raised against him.

"By the five hundred thousand names of the devil, Monsieur de Boisguilbault!" he cried, throwing away his axe; "if this is your ghost come here to torment me, I will have a mass said for you; but if it's yourself, in flesh



"Why didn't you await my orders to take them away? haven't I forbidden you a hundred times to put the axe to a single tree without consulting me?"

"Why, master, don't you remember my coming to tell you of this damage the very day after the freshet? and you said: 'In that case you must take 'em away and set out more'? This is the best time to set 'em out and I was hurrying up to make room, especially as these trees are fine to make long ladders, and I wouldn't have liked to have you lose 'em. If you'll just walk as far as our farmyard, you'll see a dozen of 'em under the shed, and to-morrow we will take the rest there."

"Very well," replied Monsieur de Boisguilbault, ashamed of his precipitation, "I remember now that I gave you leave to do it. I had forgotten. I ought to have come sooner and looked at it."

"*Dame!* you go out so little, master!" said the honest peasant. "The other day I met Monsieur Emile, as he was going to see you, and I pointed out the damage to him and asked him to remind you of it. Did he forget?"

"Apparently," replied Monsieur de Boisguilbault, "but no matter; you had better go home, for it is dark and the storm is coming."

"But you'll get wet, master; you must come to the house and wait till the rain's over."

"No," said the marquis, "it may last a long while, and I am not so far from home that I can't return in time."

"You won't have time, master; here it is beginning now, and it's going to rain hard!"

"All right, all right, I thank you, I will take care of myself," said the marquis. And he turned his back and walked away, while his farmers and their cattle started for the farm.

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"you are to blame; you must punish yourself."—And he walked straight to the carpenter.

"Why do you stay here?" he said, touching him on the shoulder.

Jean started, and said in a sharp, irritated tone, as if awakened from a dream:

"What! what do you want of me, I pray you? Have you come back to strike me again? See, here's the rest of your cane! I intended to bring it to you to-morrow to remind you of what happened to you this evening."

"I was wrong," faltered Monsieur de Boisguilbault.

"It's very easy to say 'I was wrong,'" retorted the carpenter; "and with that, when you are old and rich and a marquis, you think that you have made everything right."

"What reparation do you demand of me?"

"You know very well that I can demand nothing of you. I could break you in two with a mere tap, and, besides that, I am your debtor. But I shall bear you a grudge all my life for making gratitude a humiliating and heavy burden for me to bear. I wouldn't have believed that that could ever happen to me, for my heart is no more ungrateful than any other man's, and I submitted to the vexation of being unable to thank you. But, mind you, I had rather go to prison or resume my vagabond life, than put up with blows. Go away and leave me in peace. I was arguing myself into a calmer state of mind, and you come and make me angry again. I have to keep telling myself that you are a little mad to avoid saying something worse to you."

"Well, Jean, it is true, I am a little mad," rejoined the marquis sadly, "and this isn't the first time that I have lost control of my reason about a trifle. That is

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self out with fatigue in order to make me blush and weep all the days of my life."

"If you take it that way—" said Jean, half-conquered; "no, I am not a bad man, and I can forgive you for a young man's folly. The devil! your head is still hot and your hand quick. What did it mean? However, let us say no more about it; once more, I forgive you."

"You consent to work for me?"

"At half price. Let us arrange it that way to settle the question."

"There is no comparison between my position and yours. There would be still less between your work and your wages. Be generous; that is the noblest and most perfect revenge. Come and work for me as you work for other people; forget that I did you a service which my purse never so much as discovered, and thus force me to be your debtor, since you will accept, in satisfaction of an irreparable outrage, the most paltry of reparations—money."

"I can't understand a word when you twist it about that way. However, we will see if we can get along together. But suppose I go to your house and my face makes you angry? Come, can't you tell what you have had against me all these years? You surely owe me that. It must be that, without knowing it, I resemble somebody who has injured you. It can't be hereabout: for I don't know of anybody except the curé of Cuzion's old horse that I look anything like."

"Ask me no questions; it is impossible for me to answer. Admit that I am subject to these outbreaks of madness, and love me through pity, as I cannot be loved otherwise."

"Monsieur de Boisguilbault," said the carpenter warmly, "you mustn't talk like that; you don't do your-

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won't be pleasant walking. Here, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, take my advice and put this leather apron of mine over your shoulders. It isn't handsome, but it never touches anything but wood—my trade is a clean one, that is what I have always liked about it—and it isn't afraid of the water."

"On the contrary, I insist on your putting it on your own back; you are drenched with perspiration, and although you choose to treat me as an old man, you are no longer young yourself, my friend. Come, no ceremony! I am warmly clad. Don't take cold on my account; remember that I struck you to-night."

"You are as sly as the devil! Well, let us be off! It is true, I am no longer young, although I don't feel my years much as yet. But do you know that I am hardly ten years younger than you? Do you remember the time I built the wooden house in your park—your chalet, as you call it? Well, it was nineteen years ago last St. Jean's Day that I raised the frame."

"Yes, that is true, only nineteen years. It seems longer to me. By the way, the little house is very well built, and there are very few repairs to make. Will you look after them?"

"If there's anything to be done, I don't say no. It's a job that gave me a lot of trouble in its time. How often I had to look at your devilish pictures to try to make it look like them!"

"It is your master-piece and you enjoyed it."

"Yes, there were days when I enjoyed it too much, it made me sick; but when you would come and say: 'Jean, that isn't right; you are making a mistake;' *dame!* how angry you made me!"

"You lost your temper and almost told me to be off!"

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it comes down! This is just the kind of night that Emile arrived in this region. I met him under a big rock where he had gone for shelter, and I had no idea that when I crept in there I put my hand on a friend, a true manly heart, a treasure!"

"You are very much attached to him, aren't you? He has tried very often to talk to me about you."

"And you would never let him? I suspected as much. He is a man like you; no prouder in the depths of his heart and as ready to give his life as his purse for the unfortunate. But he doesn't lose his temper for nothing, and when he says a pleasant word to you, you aren't afraid that he's going to hit you with a club."

"Oh! I know that he's a much better and very much more amiable man than I am. If you see him to-night or to-morrow morning, tell me how he is. Tell him to come and see me, for I am overwhelmed by his sorrow."

"And so am I; but I have more hope than you and he. However, if I were rich like you——"

"What would you do?"

"I don't know; but money makes everything smooth with people of Père Cardonnet's cut. Suppose you should set him up in some business and sacrifice a few hundred thousand francs—you who have three or four millions and no children! He isn't so rich as he seems to be! Perhaps he may have more income than you, but his capital is smaller, I fancy."

"So you would approve of buying his son's liberty?"

"There are some people who never give anything away, and who sell what they ought to give away. Why, by the blood of the devil, here we are in the pond! Stop! stop! that isn't land, it's water. We have gone too far to the right; but our brains are not fuddled by wine. How are we to get out of this?"

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He hastened into the hovel, whispered a few hurried words to the old woman and Gilberte, whom, by a sudden inspiration, he had metamorphosed into a curé's sister, then returned to Monsieur de Boisguilbault and led him in, saying:

"Come, monsieur le marquis, come; you won't frighten anybody. The sick children are better, and there's a brisk little fire to dry your clothes."

XXX

THE IMPROMPTU SUPPER

The weather must needs have been very bad, or the marquis have unconsciously undergone some mysterious influence; for he actually made up his mind to risk a meeting with an entire stranger. He entered, and saluting the pretended widow with timid courtesy, drew near the fire, on which the old woman was hastily tossing fresh branches, deploring the condition of her old master's clothes.

"Oh! good people, is it possible; what a state you're in, monsieur le marquis! Really, I wouldn't 'a' known you if Jean hadn't told me. Warm yourself, warm yourself, monsieur, for there's a chance of catching your death at your age."

And, thinking that she showed great zeal and interest by her sinister predictions, the good woman, completely bewildered by the arrival of such a visitor, came near setting fire to her mantelpiece.

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only twice, on her father's arm. He had recognized Monsieur Antoine in the distance and had turned his head away. When he had been obliged to pass them at close quarters, he had shut his eyes to avoid seeing the girl's dreaded features. Therefore he had no idea of her figure, her face or her carriage.

Jean had lied with so much self-possession and so aptly that the marquis suspected nothing. The features of Sylvain Charasson, who was lying like a cat in the ashes, sound asleep, could not be so unfamiliar to him, for the page of Châteaubrun, a shameless marauder by nature, must have been caught by him many a time clinging to fruit-laden branches along his hedges; but he asked so few questions and took such painstaking care to avoid seeing or knowing anything of what took place outside his park wall, that he had no idea of the child's name or station in life.

Having no feeling of distrust, therefore, and being impelled by the mental and physical agitation he had undergone that evening, to open his heart more than usual, he ventured to follow the charitable lady's movements with his eyes, and even to approach her and ask some questions concerning the invalids. The somewhat shy reserve of this friend of the poor inspired in him profound respect, and it seemed to him worthy of all praise and in the best of taste that, instead of boasting of her good works before him, she seemed disturbed and annoyed to have been taken by surprise in the exercise of her functions as a sister of charity.

Gilberte was so afraid of being recognized that she was afraid to let her voice be heard—as if it were not as unfamiliar to the marquis as her face—and waited for the peasant woman to answer his questions. But Jean, fearing that the old woman would fail to play her part intelli-

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join you in your good deeds, madame, I entreat you, or, if you do not choose to do me that honor, send all your poor to me. A simple recommendation from you will make them sacred to me."

"I know that they do not need that, monsieur le marquis," replied Gilberte, "and that you assist many more than I can hope to do."

"You see that that is not so, for I have come here entirely by chance, and you are here for the express purpose of doing good."

"Oh no! I did not divine that they needed me," replied Gilberte; "this poor woman came after me; except for that I should probably have known no more about it than you."

"You try in vain to decry your deserts in order to diminish my culpability. They send for you, and they dare not come near me: that fact alone condemns me and glorifies you."

"The deuce! my dear Gilberte," said the carpenter, leading the girl apart, "in my opinion you are performing miracles and you could tame the old owl if you would only have the courage. *Ah but!* as Janille says, all goes well, and if you will act and talk like me, I will answer for it that you will reconcile him with your father."

"Oh! if I only could! but alas! my father has made me promise, yes, swear, that I would never try it."

"And yet he would give all he owns to have you succeed! Look, you, when he made you promise that, he thought that that was impossible which is quite possible to-day—not to-morrow perhaps, but this evening, now! We must strike the iron while it's hot, and you can see that there has been a great change already, as he and I came here together and he talks to me in such a friendly way."

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He dragged, almost carried Sylvain to a short distance from the house, and there, putting his leather apron over his shoulders, he said to him, pulling his ears briskly to fix his words in his memory:

"Run to Châteaubrun and tell Monsieur Antoine that Gilberte is going to Boisguilbault with me; tell him to keep quiet, that all goes well in that direction, and that he needn't worry if she passes the night away from home. Do you hear? do you understand?"

"I hear well enough, but I don't understand," replied Sylvain. "Will you let my ears alone, you old villain of a Jean!"

"I'll make them longer than they are, if you argue; and if you make a botch of my errand, I'll tear them off to-morrow."

"I heard you, that's enough; let me go."

"And if you stop to play on the road, look out!"

"*Pardié!* it's fine weather to play!"

"And if you lose my goatskin apron!"

"I'm no such fool, it won't do me any harm!"

And the child started off at full speed toward the ruins, picking his way in the darkness with the instinct of a cat.

"Now," said Jean leading the old mare and the *bar-*

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that he lost all his bashfulness and expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms that his respect would permit. Gilberte trembled at the thought that this sympathetic feeling might change to wrath at any moment, and old Jean laughed in his beard, relying on Providence.

Although it was only nine o'clock, everybody at the château of Boisguilbault had retired when our travellers arrived. No one except old Martin ever paid any attention to the master after sunset, and on this evening Martin had closed the park after seeing the marquis enter his chalet, and had no suspicion that he had gone abroad and was travelling around the country in the rain and thunder, with an old carpenter and a young woman.

Jean was not particularly anxious to go into the courtyard with Gilberte; for, living so near Châteaubrun as they did, it was impossible that some if not all of the servants should not be familiar with the lovely girl's face, and the first exclamation would betray her.

But the rain was still falling, and there was no plausible excuse for making the marquis or Gilberte alight at the outer gate, especially as Monsieur de Boisguilbault absolutely insisted that his companions should come in and wait by the fire until the rain, which was quite cold and continuous, had ceased. Jean meanwhile was dying with longing to seize this pretext for prolonging the interview; but Gilberte refused in dismay to enter the dreadful manor-house of Boisguilbault, and it was certain that there was great peril in doing it.

Luckily the marquis's eccentric habits made it impossible for them to effect an entrance to the château. In vain did they ring the bell again and again, the wind roared so fiercely that the sound was carried far away. No servant, male or female, slept in that part of the building, where a grewsome solitude habitually prevailed;

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am distressed to ask you to walk a few steps on the gravel; but you will not have time to wet your feet, for my hermitage is right here, behind these rocks."

Gilberte shuddered from head to foot as she entered the chalet, alone with that strange old man whom she had always believed to be a little mad, and who now led the way into the darkness. She was somewhat relieved when he opened a second door, and she saw the corridor lighted by a lamp which stood in a niche decorated with flowers. That retreat, so luxurious and comfortable despite its rustic exterior, pleased her exceedingly, and in her youthful imagination, enamored of poetic simplicity, she fancied that she had found the sort of palace of which she had often dreamed.

Since Emile had been admitted to the mysterious chalet, notable improvements had been made there. He had impressed upon the old man that the stoical habits by which he undertook to protest against his own wealth were beginning to be too severe for a man of his years; and, although Monsieur de Boisguilbault was not as yet attacked by any serious infirmity he admitted that he had suffered much from the cold there during the winter. Emile had himself brought from the château carpets, hangings, thick curtains and suitable furniture; he had frequently lighted a fire in the huge stove for protection against the dampness on rainy nights, and the marquis had yielded to the pleasant sensation of being cared for, a sensation entirely mental to him, in which he saw the proof of a zealous and delicate affection. The young man had also rearranged and beautified the room in which he and the old man often took their evening meal. He had made it into a sort of salon, and Gilberte was delighted to place her little feet, for the first time in her life, on superb bearskin rugs, and to gaze in admiration at the beautiful vases

of old Sèvres, filled with the rarest flowers, standing on a marble console.

The fireplace, filled with very dry pine cones, blazed up as if by enchantment when the marquis tossed in a piece of burning paper, and the candles, reflected in a mirror, the oaken frame of which was curiously carved and twisted, soon filled the room with a brilliant light dazzling to the eyes of a girl accustomed to the poor little lamp to which Janille supplied oil with a sparing hand, after the example of the woman in the Bible.

Monsieur de Boisguilbault, for the first time in his life, exerted himself with a sort of coquetry to do the honors of his chalet to such a charming guest. He took an artless pleasure in watching her examine and admire his flowers, and promised her that on the very next day she should have all the grafts and all the seeds to replenish the *vicarage garden.* Resuming momentarily the animation of youth, he ran hither and thither to find the little curiosities he had brought back from his trip to Switzerland, and offered them to her with ingenuous joy; and when she blushingly refused to accept anything, he took the little basket in which she had taken syrups and sweetmeats to her sick protégés and filled it with pretty bits of wood-work carved at Fribourg, specimens of rock-crystal, agates and cornelians set in seals and rings; and lastly with all the flowers in the vases, of which he made an enormous bouquet as deftly as he could.

The touching grace with which Gilberte in her confusion thanked the old man, her artless questions concerning his travels in Switzerland, of which Monsieur de Boisguilbault retained most enthusiastic recollections, expressed in terms that were far from classic, the interest with which she listened to him, her intelligent comments when she succeeded in recovering her self-possession,

the fascinating tones of her voice, the distinction of her simple, natural manners, her absence of coquetry, and the mixture of alarm and enthusiasm in her bearing and her features, which made her beauty even more impressive than usual, her glowing cheeks, her eyes moist with emotion and fatigue, her bosom oppressed by unfamiliar agitation, and her angelic smile which seemed to implore mercy or protection—all combined to produce such a profound impression on the marquis and took possession of him so rapidly, that he suddenly felt that he loved her with all his heart; with a holy love, be it understood, not the base desire of an old man for youth and beauty, but the love of a father for the pure and adorable child. And when the carpenter joined them, himself dazzled and overjoyed to find himself in such a light, warm room, he thought that he was dreaming when he heard Monsieur de Boisguilbault say to Gilberte: "Put your feet to the fire, my dear child; I am terribly afraid you have caught cold to-night, and if you have I shall never forgive myself so long as I live!"

Thereupon, the marquis, impelled by an extraordinary outburst of expansiveness, turned to the carpenter and held out his hand, saying:

"Come and sit down by the fire with us. Poor Jean! you were thinly clad and you are wet to the bone. I am the cause of that too; if you hadn't insisted on accompanying me, you would have gone to the farmhouse and you would be there now; you are hungry, too, and you would have had your supper. How am I to give you anything to eat here? and I am sure that you are dying of hunger!"

"Faith, Monsieur de Boisguilbault," said the carpenter, with a smile, thrusting his clogs into the hot ashes, "I snap my fingers at the rain, but not at hunger. Your

wooden house has become deuced fine since I put my hand to it; but if there was a piece of bread in one of these closets, in which I once put shelves, I should think them still prettier. From noon till night I chopped like a deaf man, and I am weaker than a rat at this moment."

"Bless my soul!" cried Monsieur de Boisguilbault, "now I think of it, I haven't supped either. I had entirely forgotten it, and I am sure that there is something here, I don't know where. Come, Jean, let us look and we shall find it."

"Knock and it shall be opened unto you," said the carpenter, gayly, shaking the door at the end of the room.

"Not there, Jean!" said the marquis, hastily; "there's nothing but books there."

"Ah! this is the door that doesn't shut tight," said Jean; "you see, I put my hand right on it. I'll fix it to-morrow; it's simply a matter of taking a little off the top so that the bolt will slide. Isn't your old Martin smart enough to fix that? He was always clumsy and awkward, that fellow!"

Jean, who was stronger than the two old men at Boisguilbault together, closed the door without a suspicion of curiosity, and the marquis was grateful to him for his indifference, having watched him closely and with evident uneasiness so long as he held the knob in his hand.

"There is ordinarily a small table here with my supper all served," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault. "I can't imagine what has become of it, unless Martin forgot me to-night."

"Oh! unless you forgot to wind him up the old clock in his brain has not stopped," said the carpenter, who recalled with pleasure all the details of the marquis's

home-life with which he was once so familiar. "What is there behind this screen? Aha! this has a very appetizing and substantial look!" and he folded the screen, revealing a table laden with a *galantine*, a loaf of bread, a plate of strawberries and a bottle of Bordeaux.

"That's a dainty little supper to offer a lady, Monsieur de Boisguilbault."

"Oh! if I thought that madame would deign to accept it!" said the marquis, rolling the table toward Gilberte.

"Why not!" laughed Jean. "I'll wager that the dear soul thought of other people before thinking about the care of her own body. Come, if she will eat just a few strawberries, and you the meat, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, I'll take care of the bread and a glass of black wine."

"We will eat as all men should eat," replied the marquis, "each according to his appetite; and the experiment will prove, I am sure, that the most solid portion, intended for one person only, will be enough for several. Oh! I beg you, madame, to let me have the pleasure of waiting on you."

"I am not at all hungry," said Gilberte, who had been for several days past too much distressed and excited not to have lost her appetite; "but to induce you two to eat, I will go through the motions."

Monsieur de Boisguilbault sat beside her and waited upon her with great zeal. Jean declared that he was too dirty to sit with them, and, when the marquis insisted, he confessed that he should be very ill at ease in such soft, deep chairs. He took a wooden stool, a relic of the former rustic furniture of the chalet, and, planting himself under the mantel, where he could dry himself from head to foot, began to eat with great zest. His por-

tion was amply sufficient, for Gilberte simply nibbled at the strawberries, and the marquis was a phenomenally small eater. Moreover, even if he had more appetite than usual, he would gladly have stinted himself for the man he had struck two hours earlier, and who had forgiven him so frankly.

The peasant eats slowly and in silence. To him it is not the gratification of a capricious and fugitive craving, but a sort of solemn function ; for on a working-day the meal hour is at the same time an hour of rest and reflection. Jappeloup became very grave, therefore, as he methodically cut his bread into small pieces and watched the cones blazing on the hearth. Monsieur de Boisguilbault, having gradually exhausted all that one can say to a person one does not know, relapsed into his usual taciturnity, and Gilberte, overdone by several nights of sleeplessness and weeping, felt an insurmountable drowsiness creep over her, the effect of the heat from the fire following the cold and dampness of the storm. She fought against it as long as she could, but the poor child was little more accustomed than her friend the carpenter to luxurious arm-chairs, fur rugs and candle-light. As she tried to smile and to answer the more and more infrequent remarks of the marquis, she felt as if she were magnetized ; her lovely head gradually sank on the back of the chair, her pretty foot slipped nearer to the fire, and her strong, regular breathing suddenly betrayed the victory of sleep over her will-power.

Monsieur de Boisguilbault, seeing that the carpenter was lost in thought, began to scrutinize Gilberte's features more closely than he had as yet dared to do, and a sort of shudder passed over him when he saw, beneath the black lace which had partly fallen from her head, the luxuriant dazzling masses of golden hair. But he was

roused from his contemplation by the carpenter, who said to him in an undertone:

"Monsieur de Boisguilbault, I'll bet that you haven't a suspicion of what I am going to tell you. Look carefully at this pretty little lady, and then I will tell you who she is."

Monsieur de Boisguilbault turned pale and gazed at the carpenter with a dismayed expression.

XXXI

UNCERTAINTY

"Well, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, have you looked at her enough," continued the carpenter, with a mischievous, self-satisfied air, "and cannot you yourself guess what should interest you most in her?"

The marquis rose and at once fell back in his chair. A ray of light had passed through his mind at last, and his penetration, so long at fault, suddenly went farther than Jean desired. He thought that he had guessed, and he cried in a tone of intense indignation:

"She shall not stay here an instant longer!"

Gilberte, awakened with a start and terrified beyond words, saw before her the marquis's angry face. She thought that she was lost, and reflecting with despair that, instead of bringing her father and Monsieur de Boisguilbault together, she would be the cause of embittering their enmity, she had no other thought than to take all the blame upon herself and to seek pardon for

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tried to say about me; I don't know what my position is here, but it is unendurable to me. Let us go!"

"No—no—" said the marquis, beset by irresolution and shame; "it is still raining, the weather is horrible and I don't want you to go."

"Well, then, why did you want to turn her out just now?" retorted Jean with contemptuous tranquillity; "who can understand your whims? For my part, I give it up, and I am going."

"I will not stay here without you!" cried Gilberte, rising and running after the carpenter, as he walked toward the door.

"Mademoiselle—or madame," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, stopping her and detaining the carpenter also, "please listen to me, and if you know nothing of the strange thoughts that assail me at this moment, forgive an agitation which must seem very absurd to you, but which is very painful to me, I assure you! I owe you an explanation of it, however. Jean just gave me to understand that you were not the person that I supposed—but another person—whom I do not wish to see or to know. *Mon Dieu!* I don't know how to tell you. Either you understand me too well or you cannot understand me at all."

"Ah! I understand you at last," said the crafty carpenter, "and I will tell madame what you cannot succeed in explaining to her.—Madame Rose," he continued, turning to Gilberte and resolutely giving her the name of the curé of Cuzion's sister, "you know Mademoiselle Gilberte de Châteaubrun, your young neighbor? Well, monsieur le marquis has a great grudge against her, so it seems; we must believe that she has offended him shamefully; and just as I was going to tell him something about you and Emile——"

"What do you say?" cried the marquis. "Emile?"

"This doesn't concern you," retorted Jean: "I shall tell you nothing more, I am speaking to Madame Rose. Yes, Madame Rose, Monsieur de Boisguilbault detests Mademoiselle Gilberte; he has taken it into his head that you might be she; that is why he wanted to put you out—by the window in preference to the door."

Gilberte felt a mortal distaste for continuing this extraordinary and audacious mystification; for some minutes past, she had been conscious of such a warm feeling of sympathy for the marquis, that she reproached herself for abusing his error and subjecting him to emotions which seemed to make him suffer as keenly as she herself suffered. She determined to disabuse him gradually, and to be bolder than her facetious companion in daring to face the results of Monsieur de Boisguilbault's wrath.

"There is at least one enigma for me in what you tell me," she said with dignified assurance. "I cannot understand how Gilberte de Châteaubrun can be an object of reprobation on the part of a man so just and so worthy of respect as Monsieur de Boisguilbault. As I know nothing of her which can justify such detestation, and as it is important that I should know what to think about her, I beg monsieur le marquis to tell me all the evil that he knows of her, so that she may at least have an opportunity to exculpate herself in the minds of honorable people who know her."

"I should have preferred," said the marquis, with a profound sigh, "that the name of Châteaubrun should not be mentioned before me."

"Is it a name upon which there is any stain, I pray to know," demanded Gilberte, with an irresistible outburst of pride.

"No—no—I never said that," replied the marquis,

whose wrath subsided as quickly as it blazed up. "I accuse nobody, I make no reproach against anybody. I am on unfriendly terms with the person mentioned; I do not wish any one to speak of her to me, nor do I speak of her myself—so why ask me useless questions?"

"Useless questions!" echoed Gilberte; "you cannot deem them such, monsieur le marquis. It is very strange that a man like you should be on bad terms with a mere girl, whom he does not know, whom perhaps he has never seen. Surely she must have been guilty of some detestable action or have said some hateful thing about him, and that is what I want to know, that is what I entreat you to tell me: so that, if Gilberte de Châteaubrun deserves neither esteem nor confidence, I may avoid the society of so dangerous a person."

"That's what I call talking!" cried Jean, clapping his hands. "Say on! I too should be very glad to know what to think about her; for this Gilberte has been very good to me; she has given me food and drink when I was hungry and thirsty; she has spun her wool to make clothes for me when I was cold. To my eyes she has always been charitable, gentle, devoted to her parents, and a good girl if ever there was one! Now, if she has committed some shameful sin, I shall be ashamed to be her debtor, and I will never owe her anything more."

"It was your absurd explanation that caused all this useless discussion," said the marquis to the carpenter. "Where did you pick up all these foolish ideas that you attribute to me? It is the young woman's father with whom I am on bad terms, on account of a quarrel of many years' standing, and not with a child whom I don't know, and against whom I have nothing to say, absolutely nothing."

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of wrath, which would have led her to expect a reaction marked by weakness and emotion. She no longer felt the courage to insist, and understanding, from the sudden frigidity of the marquis's manner, that she was half divined, and that an unconquerable distrust had taken possession of him, she felt so ill at ease, that she wished to go away at once; but Jean was not at all satisfied with the result of this explanation, and he determined to strike the last blow.

"Well," he said, "it must be as Monsieur de Boisguilbault pleases. He is kind and just at the bottom of his heart, Madame Rose; let us go, and cause him no more pain; but first I would like to have a sort of understanding between you two. Come, let us open our hearts a little! You will blush, scold me, perhaps you will cry. But I know what I am doing, I know that this is an opportunity that may never come again, and that we must be willing to submit to a little trouble to assist and comfort those we love. You look at me in surprise! don't you know that Monsieur de Boisguilbault is our Emile's best friend, that he has his whole confidence, and that he is perfectly well acquainted with all his troubles and yours, although he doesn't know that you are the one?—Yes, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, Madame Rose here is the lady! you understand me, don't you? So speak to her, encourage her, tell her that Emile has done right, and she, too, in refusing to yield to Père Cardonnet's malice. That is what I intended to say to you when you interrupted me with an outcry about Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun, when God knows if I was thinking of her!"

Gilberte became so confused that Monsieur de Boisguilbault, who was beginning to regard her with mingled interest and uneasiness, was touched by her plight and

strove to reassure her. He took her hand and said, leading her back to her chair:

"Don't be embarrassed before me; I am an old man and it is another old man who betrays your secrets. Undoubtedly he has a very bold and unusual way of acting; but as his intentions are good and his exceptional character endears him to the person in whom you and I are more interested than in anybody else in the world, let us try to overcome our mutual embarrassment, and, as he says, to make the most of the opportunity!"

But Gilberte, confounded by the carpenter's determination, and terrified to see her heart's secret in the hands of a man who still inspired more terror than confidence, put both her hands over her face and did not answer.

"Well, well!" said the carpenter, whom nothing in the world could deter in his undertakings, whether it was a matter of overcoming a scruple or of felling a forest, "here she is all covered with mortification, and I shall be scolded for my indiscretion! but if Emile was here, he wouldn't disavow me. He would be very glad to have Monsieur de Boisguilbault see with his own eyes whether he has placed his affections wisely, and he will feel more than a little proud to-morrow when Monsieur de Boisguilbault says to him: 'I have seen her, I know her, and I am not surprised any longer!'—Isn't it true that you'll say that, Monsieur de Boisguilbault?"

Monsieur de Boisguilbault did not reply. He was still gazing at Gilberte, struggling between a powerful attraction and a horrible suspicion. He walked several turns up and down the room to overcome a terrible feeling of oppression, and after many sighs and internal conflicts, he returned to Gilberte and took both her hands.

"Whoever you may be," he said, "you have in your

hands the destiny of the noblest boy that I in my old age have ever dared to dream of for my staff and my consolation. I shall die before long, and I shall leave this earth without having known an instant's joy, if I do not leave Emile at peace with himself. Oh! I implore you—you who are destined to exercise so great an influence, for good or evil, over his whole future,—retain on the side of truth that heart which is so worthy to be its sanctuary. You are very young, you do not know yet what a woman's love is in the life of a man like him! You do not know perhaps that it depends upon you to make of him a hero or a dastard, a coward or an apostate. Alas! you probably do not understand the bearing of what I am saying to you now. No, you are too young; the more I look at you, the more like a child you seem to me! Poor young thing, without experience and without strength, you are to determine the future of a noble heart, to break it or ennoble it. Forgive me for saying this; I am deeply moved and I cannot find fitting words. I have no desire either to distress you or to cause you embarrassment; but I am depressed and alarmed, and the more fully I realize your innocence, the more I feel that Emile no longer belongs to me."

"Forgive me, monsieur le marquis," said Gilberte, wiping away her tears, "I understand you very well, and although I am in truth very young, I am conscious of my responsibility in God's sight; but I am not in question now, it is not myself whom I wish to defend and justify, but Emile, that noble heart whom you seem to doubt. Oh! have no fear! Emile will lie neither to you, nor his father, nor himself, nor other men. I don't know if I fully understand the importance of his ideas and the depth of yours; but I adore the truth. I am no philosopher, I am too ignorant. But I am pious, I was brought

up in the precepts of the Gospel, and I cannot interpret them in a different sense from that Emile gives to them. I understand that his father, who also invokes the Gospel, by the way, when the fancy strikes him, wishes him to be false to the faith of the Gospel, and if I believed that Emile was capable of consenting, I should blush for having been so grossly misled as to love a man without intelligence and conscience; but I am not so unfortunate as that. Emile will be equal to renouncing me, if need be, rather than renounce his own manhood; and as for myself, I shall know how to be brave, if at times his courage seems to waver. But I am not afraid of it; I know that he suffers, and I suffer too; but I will be worthy of his affection, as he is worthy of yours, and God will help us to bear everything, for He does not abandon those who suffer for love of Him and for the glory of His name!"

"Well said!" exclaimed the carpenter; "I wish I could talk like that. But no matter, I think as she does, and the good Lord gives me as much credit."

"Yes, you are right," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, impressed by the depth of conviction revealed by the carpenter's earnest tone; "I did not know, Jean, that you would be as devoted a friend to Emile as myself and perhaps a more useful one."

"I don't say that, Monsieur de Boisguilbault; I know that Emile looks upon you as his real father, in place of the un-Christian father that fate gave him; but I am something of a friend to him, and last night I flatter myself that I cheered him up, as I cheered up some other people this morning. As for her," he said, pointing to Gilberte, "she didn't need any cheering up. I didn't expect she would! From the first moment her mind was made up, and in my opinion it's a fine thing for a girl of

her age to be so strong as that, although you don't seem to think very much of it."

The marquis hesitated and continued to pace the floor without speaking; then he stopped at the window, opened it, returned to Gilberte, and said:

"The rain has stopped, and I am afraid your people will be anxious about you. I—I don't want to keep you any longer to-night, but—but we will see each other again, and I shall be better prepared to talk with you,—for I have many things to say to you."

"No, monsieur le marquis," replied Gilberte, rising, "we shall never meet again; for in that case I must continue to deceive you and that would be impossible to me. Chance has thrown us together, and I thought that I was only fulfilling a bounden duty in offering you some trivial attentions which my heart bade me offer. Thus far I was not blameworthy, I leave it to you to judge; for in order to induce you to accept them, it was necessary to tell a falsehood; and furthermore, my father had made me swear that I would never annoy you with his grief, with his repentance for an injury he did you long ago, of which I know nothing, with his affection for you, which has remained like a painful wound in the depths of his heart! In my dreams as a child I often formed a plan of coming and throwing myself at your feet and saying to you: 'My father suffers, he is unhappy on your account. If he has injured you, accept my tears, my humiliation, my enthusiasm, my life if you will, in expiation of his fault; give him your hand and trample me under your feet, and I will bless you, if you remove from my father's heart the grief that preys upon him and pursues him even in his sleep.'—Yes, that is the dream that I used to cherish long ago; but I abandoned it because my father ordered me to, thinking that I should simply add to your

anger; and I abandon it more completely than ever to-night, seeing the coldness and aversion which my name inspires in you. So I take my leave without imploring you in his behalf, distressed by a very painful certainty that my father is the victim of very great injustice on your part; but I will put forth all my energies to distract his thoughts and comfort him. And as for you, monsieur le marquis, I leave you the means of punishing me for the innocent stratagem to which I gave my assent this evening in order to save the health and perhaps the life of the man whom my father once loved so dearly! I leave you my secret, which has been disclosed to you against my will, but which I no longer blush to know is in your hands; for it is the secret of a proud heart, and of a love that God has blessed by inspiring it. Have no fear of seeing me again, monsieur le marquis; and have no fear that Jean, our imprudent but generous friend, who has exposed himself to your anger by trying to reconcile us, will ever annoy you by reminding you of us. I shall find a way to make him abandon the task. I have been honored by your hospitality this evening, monsieur le marquis, and you will allow me never to forget it. You will have no reason to repent of it; for you will not have been the victim of a lie, and if it will be a consolation to your hatred, you still have an opportunity to drive Antoine de Châteaubrun's daughter from your presence with insulting touch."

"I would like to see him do it!" cried Jean Jappeloup, taking his stand beside her and putting her arm through his; "I who have done all the harm and told all the lies against her wish; I, who got it into my head that she would succeed in putting her hand in yours! You are obstinate, Monsieur de Boisguilbault; but, by all the devils! you shall not insult my Gilberte, for if you

did, I should remember that I cut your cane in two to-night!"

"You talk like a fool, Jean," replied Monsieur de Boisguilbault coldly. "Mademoiselle," he said to Gilberte, "will you allow me to offer you my arm to return to your carriage?"

Gilberte accepted tremblingly; but she felt that the marquis's arm trembled even more. He assisted her into the carriage without speaking; then, noticing that it was still quite cold, although the sky was clear, he said:

"You have come from a very warm room and you are not dressed warmly enough; I will go and get something more for you."

Gilberte thanked him and reminded him that she had her father's cloak.

"But that is damp; it is worse than nothing," said the marquis. And he returned to the chalet.

"The devil take the old fool!" growled Jean, lashing the mare angrily. "I have had enough of him; I am out of temper with him; I have had no sort of success, and I long to get out of his den. I'll never put my feet inside it again; the man's glance gives me a cold in the head. Let's be off and not wait for him."

"Nay, we must wait for him, and not make him run after us," said Gilberte.

"Bah! do you suppose he cares whether you take cold or not? Indeed, he's forgotten all about it; you'll see if he comes back. Let us go."

But when they reached the gate they found that it was locked, that Monsieur de Boisguilbault had kept the key, and that they must either wait for him or go back and ask him for it. Jean was cursing loudly when the marquis suddenly appeared, carrying a package which he placed on Gilberte's knees, saying:

"I kept you waiting a little; I had some difficulty in finding what I wanted. I beg you to keep it for your own use, as well as these little things which you left with your basket. Don't get down, Jappeloup, I will open the gate for you. I shall expect you to-morrow, my dear fellow," he added, when the gate was open.

And he offered the carpenter his hand, which the latter hesitated to take, understanding nothing of the inconsequent impulses of so uncertain and perturbed a mind.

"Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun," the marquis then said in an almost inaudible tone of voice, "will you also shake hands with me before we part?"

Gilberte leaped lightly to the ground, removed her glove and took the old man's hand, which trembled terribly. With an impulsive outburst of respectful compassion she put it to her lips, saying:

"You will not forgive Antoine; do, at least, forgive Gilberte?"

A profound groan issued from the old man's breast. He made a movement as if to put his lips to Gilberte's brow, but recoiled in dismay. Then he took her head in both hands, squeezed it a moment as if he would crush it, and, finally, kissed her hair, which he moistened with a tear as cold as the drop of water that drips from the glacier. Then he suddenly pushed her away with all his strength and fled, hiding his face in his handkerchief. Gilberte fancied that she heard a sob die away in the distance with the sound of his uncertain footsteps on the gravel and the whispering of the breeze among the aspens.

XXXII

A WEDDING PRESENT

There was something at once ghastly and heartrending in Monsieur de Boisguilbault's strange leave-taking, and Gilberte was so affected by it that she began to weep again herself.

"Well, what's the matter?" said Jean when they were on the road to Châteaubrun; "are you going to lose your eyes this evening. You are about as mad as yonder old man, my Gilberte; for sometimes you are reasonable and talk pure gold, and then suddenly you are as weak and whining as a baby. Let me tell you this: Monsieur de Boisguilbault has a kind heart; but, for all Emile and your father may say, he is a little crack-brained; that's sure. There's no relying on him, but just the same, we need never despair of him. It may be that you will never hear of him again, and it may just as well be that he'll jump on your father's neck some fine day, if he happens to meet him at the right moment. It will depend on the moon!"

"I don't know what to think of him," said Gilberte, "for I really believe I should go mad if I lived with him. He frightens me horribly, and yet I have moments of irresistible affection for him. It's the same feeling that Emile had for him from the beginning. Emile has ended by loving him and losing his fear of him. So that his kindness of heart finally carries the day over the caprice of disease."

"I will tell you more about that later," replied the carpenter, "for I really must go there again and study him."

"But you knew him so well years ago! Wasn't he the same then?"

"Oh! he has grown much worse! He was habitually sad and silent, and sometimes a little hot-headed. But it didn't last long, and he was better after it. The same thing is true now; but it seems to me that it happens once or twice a day where it used to happen once or twice a year, and that he is at the same time uglier and gentler."

"How unhappy he seems!" said Gilberte, whose heart ached as she recalled the sob she heard, which still echoed in her ears.

Janille and Antoine were awaiting Gilberte's return with feverish impatience. Charasson's report had stricken them dumb and, thinking that he was daft, or that he was lying to conceal some accident that had happened to Gilberte, they had hurried to Mère Marlot's to ease their minds. Her story reassured them but gave them no light. Janille was angry with the carpenter and augured no good from this crazy enterprise. Antoine shared her fears at first, and then, in conformity with his hopeful nature, abandoned himself to pleasant illusions and built innumerable castles in Spain.

"Janille," he said, "our child and our good old Jean can perform miracles between them. What would you say if you should see Boisguilbault come home with them?"

"Ah! that's like your crazy head!" retorted Janille. "You forget that is impossible, and that the old fox is more capable of wringing our daughter's neck than of listening to sound arguments. And, then, how can people who know nothing at all make use of pretexts?"

"That is just my point. All that Boisguilbault fears is that we have taken our people into our confidence; for it is wounded pride, quite as much as betrayed friendship, alas! that makes him so timid and so unhappy. Poor Boisguilbault! Perhaps our child's innocence and Jean's loyalty will touch him. May he find it possible to forgive me of what I can never forget!"

"How can you complain when you have a treasure like Gilberte? But don't expect her to tame him. He will no more come to Châteaubrun than Cardonnet's handsome son will, and our ruins will never see either of them again."

"Emile will return with his father's consent or not at all, Janille, I have promised you; but meanwhile his conduct is worthy of all praise; Jean proved it to us this morning."

"That is to say, that you didn't understand anything about it, any more than I did; but, because you are weak, you pretended to be persuaded! you never do anything different, and you don't see that by praising that young man's noble conduct you inflame your daughter's mind. You would do better to disgust her with him by proving to her that he's mad, or that he doesn't care for her."

Their discussion was interrupted by the sound of Lanterne's hoofs, which produced a familiar cadence as she trotted over the smooth rock. They ran to meet Gilberte, and when they had almost dragged her into the pavilion, amid the hurried questions on one side and the broken replies on the other, the package which the marquis had handed Gilberte and which she had not thought of opening, caught Janille's eye.

"What's all this?" she cried, unfolding a superb Indian cashmere, sky-blue, embroidered with gold thread; "why, it's a cloak fit for a queen!"

"Ah! great Heaven!" cried Monsieur Antoine, touching the shawl with a trembling hand and turning pale as death: "I recognize this."

"And what is this box?" said Janille, opening a jewel-case which fell from the shawl.

"Those are mineral specimens, I believe," replied Gilberte suddenly, "crystals from Mont-Blanc which he picked up himself."

"No, no, you are mistaken, these shine much brighter; just look at them!"

And Gilberte to her unbounded amazement saw that it was a necklace of huge diamonds of dazzling brilliancy.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* I recognize that too," stammered Monsieur de Châteaubrun, overwhelmed by intense emotion.

"Hush, monsieur," said Janille, nudging him with her elbow; "you know diamonds and cashmere shawls when you see them, that's likely enough; you have been rich enough to have plenty of 'em. Is that any reason why you should talk so loud and prevent us from looking at them? *Diantre!* my girl, you didn't waste your time! They may be worth enough to rebuild our château, and Monsieur de Boisguilbault is no such skinflint as I thought."

Gilberte, who had seen very few diamonds in her life, persisted in believing that the necklace was of rock crystal cut like diamonds; but Monsieur de Châteaubrun, having examined the stones and the clasp, replaced them in the box, saying with a sort of pensive melancholy:

"Those diamonds are worth more than a hundred thousand francs. Monsieur de Boisguilbault has given you a marriage-portion, my child!"

"A hundred thousand francs!" cried Janille, "a hun-

dred thousand francs! Think of what you are saying, monsieur! is it possible?"

"Those glistening little stones worth so much money!" exclaimed Jappeloup, in artless amazement entirely free from covetousness; "and they are kept like that in a little box, and not used for anything?"

"People wear them," said Janille, putting the necklace around Gilberte's neck, "and they make a woman look lovely, I should say. Put the shawl over your shoulders, my girl! Not like that! I have seen ladies wearing them in Paris; but I am blessed if I can remember how they fixed them."

"They are very fine, but very uncomfortable," said Gilberte, "and it seems to me as if I were disguised with this shawl and these jewels. Come, let us fold the shawl and put the stones in the box, to send back to Monsieur de Boisguilbault. He must have felt about in the dark and made a mistake. He meant to give me some trifle and he has given me the wedding presents he gave his wife."

"Yes," said the carpenter, "he made a mistake, for sure; for a man doesn't give his dead wife's things to a stranger. He was so excited, poor man! You're not the only man whose wits go wool gathering, Monsieur Antoine."

"No, he made no mistake," said Monsieur Antoine. "He knows what he is doing, and Gilberte can keep these presents."

"Yes, yes, of course," cried Janille. "They are hers, aren't they, Monsieur Antoine? They all belong to her rightfully—since Monsieur de Boisguilbault gives them to her!"

"But it's out of the question, father! I don't want them," said Gilberte; "what should I do with them? I

should cut a ridiculous figure going out to drive in our barrow in my calico dress, covered with diamonds and a cashmere shawl!"

"*Dame!* you would rather make people laugh," said the carpenter; "the ladies of the province would burst with envy. And then, too, all the moths would come and flutter about your diamonds, for they plunge like idiots at everything that shines; in that they are like men. If Monsieur de Boisguilbault chooses to give you a *dot*, to show that he is reconciled to Monsieur Antoine, he would do much better to give you one of his small farms with a half interest in eight oxen."

"That is all very fine," said Janille, "but with the little shining stones, we raise money, we make the pavilion larger, we redeem estates, we obtain an income of two or three thousand francs, and we find a husband who brings us as much more. Then we are in comfortable circumstances for the rest of our days and we snap our fingers at Messieurs Cardonnet, father and son!"

"True enough," said Monsieur Antoine, "with these your future is assured, my child. Ah! how nobly Monsieur de Boisguilbault revenges himself! I knew what I was saying when I stood up for him against you, Janille! Will you still claim that he's a cruel, unforgiving man?"

"Nenni, monsieur, nenni! he has a good heart, I agree. Come, tell us how it all came about, you two."

They talked until midnight, recalling the most trivial details, indulging in innumerable conjectures concerning the marquis's conduct toward Antoine in the future. As it was too late for Jean Jappeloup to return to his village, he slept in Châteaubrun. Monsieur Antoine fell asleep to dream of happiness; Janille, of wealth. She had forgotten Emile and her recent disappointment. "That will all pass by," she said, "and the hundred thousand

francs will remain. We shall have no more to do with your Galuchets, when we are possessed of a tidy little fortune in the country." And she ran over in her mind all the young rustics in the neighborhood who might aspire to Gilberte's hand.

"If a mere plebeian offers himself," she thought, "he must have at least two hundred thousand francs' worth of land."—And she placed under her bolster the key to the cupboard in which she had locked Gilberte's *pot au lait*.

Gilberte, yielding to extreme fatigue, fell asleep at last, after forming a momentous resolution. The next morning she talked a long while with her father, without Janille's knowledge, then asked the latter to allow her to carry Monsieur de Boisguilbault's presents to her own room, so that she could look at them at her leisure. The good woman handed them to her unsuspectingly, for Gilberte felt obliged on this occasion to resort to dissimulation with her obstinate governess. Then she wrote a letter which she showed to her father.

"What you are doing is all right, my child," he said, with a profound sigh, "but look out for Janille when she finds it out!"

"Don't you be afraid, dear father," was the reply; "we won't tell her that I took you into my confidence, and all her anger will fall on me alone."

"Now," said Monsieur Antoine, "we must wait for our friend Jean, for we can't trust things of such value to a hare-brained chap like Master Charasson."

Gilberte awaited the carpenter's return with the more impatience because she expected to receive news of Emile from him. She had no idea that Emile was ill. But at the very thought of his mental suffering she was so beset by anxiety that she could not think of herself;

and these days of separation, which she had thought
she could endure so courageously, seemed to her so
and so depressing that she asked herself in dismay
Emile could endure them. She flattered herself tha
would find a way to write to her, although she woul
authorize him to do it; or, at least, that the carpe
would repeat their conversation to her, to the most
important words.

But the carpenter did not appear, and evening
without bringing any relief to the girl's painful anx
Her secret grief was augmented by a real annoy
Monsieur Antoine showed signs of weakening in r
to the resolution Gilberte had formed—and which h
at first approved—to refuse Monsieur de Boisguilb
gifts. He threatened again and again to consult Ja
without whose advice he had taken no important st
twenty years, and Gilberte trembled lest her old n
imperative *veto* should block the proposed restitutio

Jean did not come on the following day either. D
less he was working for Monsieur de Boisguilbault
Gilberte was surprised that, being within so short
tance, he did not divine her longing to talk with
were it only for a moment. A vague uneasiness g
her in that direction. She set out for Mère Marlot'
and as usual put in her basket the modest deli
which she took from her own dinner for her inv
But fearing that Monsieur de Châteaubrun would
his heart to Janille in her absence and that the go
ess's seal would be affixed to the jewel-case, she wr
it up in the shawl, and placed the whole at the bott
her basket, determined not to part with them aga
cept to despatch them to their destination.

Living in the country, in more than modest c
stances, Gilberte was accustomed to go about al

the neighborhood of her home. Poverty dispenses with etiquette, and it would seem that the virtue of wealthy maidens is more fragile or more precious than that of their poorer sisters, as the former are never allowed io take a step without an escort.

Gilberte went about alone on foot with as much security as a young peasant girl, and she was in reality even less exposed, for she was known, loved and respected by all whom she was likely to meet.

She was afraid neither of dogs, nor cows, nor snakes, nor of a loose colt. Children brought up in the country know how to protect themselves from those trifling dangers, which a little presence of mind and coolness are sufficient to avert. So she did not take her rustic page, nor use the family vehicle, except when the weather was threatening or she was in a hurry. On this afternoon the sun was still shining in a clear sky, and she started off with a light foot on the path across the fields. Mère Marlot's hut was almost equidistant from Châteaubrun and Boisguilbault.

The poor woman's children were fairly convalescent, and Gilberte did not stay long with them. Mère Marlot told her that Monsieur de Boisguilbault had left her a hundred francs on the day of their meeting in her hovel, and that Jean Jappeloup was working at the wooden house in the park. She had seen him pass in the morning, carrying various tools.

Gilberte thereupon thought that she might hope to meet the carpenter as he returned to Gargilesse, and she determined to go to wait for him on the road. But, fearing that she might be seen and recognized loitering about the park, she borrowed a fustian cape from Mère Marlot, on the pretext that the air was a little cool and that she felt slightly indisposed. She put the hood over her fair

that, and, thus enveloped, walked in a straight line, gliding through the hollow like a fawn, to the park gate opening to the Gargilesse road. There she hid beneath the villows on the bank of the stream, not far from the [illegible] along the edge of the park. She noticed that the gate was still open, a proof that Monsieur de Boisgilbault was not yet in the park; for as soon as he stepped inside all the gates were carefully closed and [illegible], and the uncivilized custom of the châtelain was well known throughout the neighborhood.

This circumstance emboldened her, and she walked as far as the gate, to try to see Jean Jappeloup. The roof of the chalet caught her eye; it was very near. The path was in shadow and deserted.

Stealing cautiously forward, Gilberte, who was as light as a bird, could fly in time, and, disguised as she was, need not fear being recognized. Jean would be there of course, and if she found him alone she would beckon to him and satisfy her frantic impatience to have news of Emile.

The chalet was open; there was no one inside; carpenter's tools were lying about on the floor. Profound silence reigned everywhere. Gilberte walked forward on tiptoe and placed on the table the package and the letter she had brought. Then, as she reflected that objects of value might be too much exposed in a place so ill guarded, she looked about, placed her hand on a door which seemed to open into a closet, and, noticing that the lock was removed, said to herself justly enough that Jean was probably repairing it and would doubtless come and replace it, and that there was nothing better for her to do than to place her treasure in the hands of the most faithful of friends. But as she opened the supposed closet to put the package inside, she found herself on the threshold

of a study, wherein everything was in disorder, facing a large portrait of a woman.

Gilberte did not need to look long at the portrait to recognize the original of a miniature which she had seen in her father's hands and had always supposed to be that of the *unknown* mother who had brought her into the world. If the resemblance had not been most striking, at the first glance, because of the difference in size of the two portraits, yet the attitude, the costume, the very blue shawl which Gilberte had in her hand at that moment, would have convinced her that the miniature had been made at the same time as the large portrait, or rather that it was a reduced copy of it. She stifled a cry of surprise, and, as her chaste imagination refused to grasp the possibility of an adulterous connection, she persuaded herself that, as the result of a secret marriage, of the sort we read about in novels, she was perhaps a near kinswoman, the niece or grand-niece, of Monsieur de Boisguilbault. At that moment she thought that she heard footsteps on the floor above, and, terror-stricken, she threw the package on the mantel and fled with the swiftness of an arrow.

XXXIII

THE STORY OF ONE TOLD BY THE OTHER

A few moments after Gilberte's flight, Jean returned to replace the lock of the study, followed by Monsieur de Boisguilbault, who awaited his departure to order the park to be closed. The carpenter had noticed the marquis's

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head and said with
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you have just said, I'll wager that you have never got over your wife's death! Well, it's the same way with me, and you needn't be ashamed of it before me, Monsieur de Boisguilbault; for old as I am, I tell you something seems to cut my heart in two when I think that I am alone in the world! And yet I am naturally of a cheerful disposition and I wasn't always happy in my home; but what difference does it make? my feelings are stronger than I am, for I loved that woman! The devil couldn't have prevented me from loving her."

"My friend," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, visibly touched, and making a painful effort to restrain his emotion, "she loved you, so do not complain too bitterly; and, then, you were a father. What became of your son? Where is he?"

"He is underground with my wife, Monsieur de Boisguilbault."

"I didn't know it. I knew only that you were a widower. Poor Jean! forgive me for reminding you of your sorrows! Oh! I pity you from the bottom of my heart! To have a child and lose it!"

The marquis placed his hand on the carpenter's shoulder as he leaned over his work, and all his kindness of heart appeared on his face. Jean dropped his tools and said impulsively, with one knee on the floor:

"Do you know, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, I have been unhappier than you. You can't imagine half of what I have suffered!"

"Tell me about it, if it's a relief to you. I shall understand it."

"Well, I will tell you, for you are a man of learning and judge things in this world better than anyone I know, when your mind is calm. I will tell you something that many people in my village know, but that I have never

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I kept the friend and I still love him. And that's how matters ended with me. What do you say to it?"

Monsieur de Boisguilbault did not reply. He was pacing the room and making the floor creak under his feet.

"You think me a great coward and a great fool, I'll be bound," said the carpenter, rising; "but, at all events, you see that your troubles are nothing like mine."

The marquis dropped into a chair and said nothing. Tears rolled slowly down his cheeks.

"Well, well, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, why are you weeping?" continued Jean, with artless candor. "Are you trying to make me weep too? You can't do it, I promise you! I shed so many tears of anger and grief in those days that there wasn't a single one left in my body, I'll be bound. Come, come! think of your past with patience and offer your present to God; for there are people more badly treated than you, as you see. You had for your wife a beautiful woman, virtuous, well educated and quiet. Perhaps she didn't give you quite so many kisses and caresses as I received from mine, but, at all events, she didn't deceive you, and you proved that you had no fears of her by letting her go to Paris without you whenever she wanted to. You were not jealous, and had no reason to be; while I had a thousand devils in my brain every hour of the day and night. I watched, I played the spy, I hid, because I was jealous; I blushed for it, but I suffered martyrdom; and the more I watched, the more I was convinced that she was very cunning about deceiving me. I never was able to take her by surprise. Nannie was shrewder than I was; and, when I had wasted my time watching her, she would make a scene because I suspected her. When the child was old enough to resemble anybody—and I saw that I

wasn't the one—what could you expect? I thought that I should go mad; but I got accustomed to loving him, petting him, working to support him, trembling when he bumped his head, seeing him caper round my bench, ride horseback on my timber and amuse himself dulling my tools. I had only that one! I had thought he was mine—no others came—and I couldn't get along without a child, you see. And he loved me so dearly, the little rascal! He was so bright! and, when I scolded him, he wept as if his heart would break. At last I set about forgetting my suspicions, and I succeeded so well in persuading myself that I was his father, that when he was shot in the war, I longed to shoot myself. He was handsome and brave, a good workman and as good a soldier, and it wasn't his fault if he wasn't my son! He would have made my life happy; he would have helped me with my work, and I shouldn't have had to grow old all alone. I should have had some one to keep me company, to talk with me in the evening after my day's work, to take care of me when I am sick, to put me to bed when I am tipsy, to talk to me about his mother, whom I never dare to mention to anybody, because everybody except him knew all about my unhappiness. I tell you, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, you haven't had so much to bear! You didn't have a contraband heir given you; and if you haven't had the pleasure, neither have you had the shame!"

"And I should not have had the courage you had," said the marquis. "Open that door again, Jean, and let me look at the marchioness's portrait. You have given me courage. I was insane the day I turned you out of my house. You would have saved me from becoming weak and mad. I thought that I was getting rid of an enemy, and I deprived myself of a friend."

"But why in the devil did you take me for your enemy?"

"Have you no idea?" replied the marquis, fixing his eyes upon him in a piercing glance.

"Not the least," said the carpenter emphatically.

"On your honor?" added Monsieur de Boisguilbault, wringing his hand fiercely.

"On my everlasting salvation!" replied Jean, raising his hand above his head with dignity. "I hope that you are going to tell me at last."

The marquis seemed not to hear this direct and sincere appeal. He felt that Jean told the truth, and he had resumed his seat. Turning his chair toward the study door, which Jean had opened, he gazed with profound sadness at his wife's features.

"I can understand that you continued to love your wife, that you forgave the innocent child," he said; "but how you could endure and continue to meet the friend who betrayed you—that is what passes my comprehension!"

"Ah! Monsieur de Boisguilbault, that was in fact the most difficult thing of all! especially as it was not my duty, and everybody would have applauded me if I had broken every bone in his body. But I tell you what disarmed me: I saw that he was terribly remorseful and really unhappy. So long as the fever of love had hold of him, he would have walked over my body to join his mistress. She was as lovely as a rose in May; I don't know whether you ever saw her, or remember her, but I know that Nannie was as beautiful in her way as Madame de Boisguilbault. I was mad over her, and so was he! He would have turned heathen for her, and I turned idiot. But when the youthful ardor began to die away I saw well enough that they no longer loved each other and that they were ashamed of their sin. My wife began

to love me again, seeing that I was kind and generous to her, and as for him, his sin was so heavy on his heart, that, when we drank together, he always wanted to confess to me; but I wouldn't have it, and sometimes, when he was drunk, he would kneel at my feet, yelling:

"'Kill me, Jean, kill me! I deserve it and I shall be satisfied!'

"When he was sober, he forgot about that, but he would have let himself be chopped to pieces for me; and at this moment he's my best friend, next to Monsieur Antoine. The subject of our suffering no longer exists, and our friendship has endured. It was on his account that I had my trouble with the excise people and became a vagabond for a while. Well, he worked for my customers, so as to keep them for me; he brought me money, and when I was free again gave my customers back to me; he has nothing that doesn't belong to me, and as he is younger than I am, I trust that he will close my eyes. He owes me that much; but after all, it seems to me that I love him on account of the injury he did me and the courage it required to forgive him!"

"Alas! alas!" said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, "we are sublime when we are not afraid of being ridiculous!"

He closed the study door gently and walked back toward the fireplace, when his eye fell at last on the package and a letter addressed to him.

"MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS:

"I promised you that you should hear no more of me; but you yourself compel me to remind you that I exist, and I am going to do it for the last time.

"Either you made a mistake in handing me certain objects of great value, or you intended to bestow alms on me.

"I should not blush to accept your charity if I were reduced to the necessity of imploring it; but you are mistaken, monsieur le marquis, if you think I am in want.

"Our circumstances are comfortable, considering our necessities and tastes, which are modest and simple. You are rich and generous; I should be blameworthy to accept benefactions which you might bestow on so many others; it would be robbing the poor.

"The one thing which it would have been very sweet to me to carry away from your house, and which I would have given all my blood to obtain, is a word of forgiveness, a friendly word for my father. Ah! monsieur, you cannot conceive what a child's heart suffers when she sees her father unjustly accused and knows not how to set him right. You did not furnish me with the means to do so, for you persisted in keeping silent as to the cause of your resentment; but how could you fail to understand that, under the present circumstances, I could not accept your gifts and take advantage of your kindness!

"I retain, however, a small cornelian ring which you placed on my finger when I entered your house under an assumed name. It is an object of trifling value, you told me, a souvenir of your travels. It is very precious to me, although it was not as a pledge of reconciliation that you chose to give it to me: but it will remind me of a very sweet yet very painful moment, when I felt all my heart go out toward you, with vain hopes that vanished instantly. I ought to hate you, for you hate a father whom I adore! I know not how it is I esteem your gifts with no feeling of wounded pride, and that I renounce your friendship with profound grief.

"Accept, monsieur le marquis, the deep respect of

"GILBERTE DE CHATEAUBRUN."

XXXIV

RESURRECTION

"Was it you who brought this package and letter, Jean?" queried Monsieur de Boisguilbault.

"No, monsieur, I brought nothing at all, and I don't know what they are," replied the carpenter, with the accent of truth.

"How am I to believe you?" rejoined the marquis, "when you lied to me so coolly the day before yesterday, when you introduced one person to me under the name of another?"

"The day before yesterday I lied, but I wouldn't have sworn to what I said; to-day, I swear that I saw no one come in and I do not know who brought those things. But, as you choose to mention what happened the day before yesterday, let me tell you something that I wouldn't have dared to speak of otherwise: that the poor child cried all the way home, thinking of you, and that——"

"I beg you, Jean, don't talk to me about that young woman or her father! I promised you that I would mention them when it was necessary, and on that condition you agreed not to torment me. Wait till I question you."

"All right! but suppose you keep me waiting too long and I lose patience?"

"Perhaps I shall never mention them to you and you will hold your tongue forever," said the marquis in a tone of very marked ill-humor.

"The deuce you say!" retorted the carpenter, "that wasn't our agreement."

"Off with you!" said Monsieur de Boisguilbault tartly. "Your day's work is finished, you refuse to take supper here, and no doubt Emile is waiting for you impatiently. Tell him to have courage and that I will come and see him soon—to-morrow perhaps."

"If you treat him as you do me, if you refuse to talk to him or let him talk about Gilberte, what good do you suppose a visit from you will do him? That's not the kind of thing that will cure him."

"Jean, you wear out my patience, you make me ill! Be off, I say!"

"Oho! the wind has changed," thought the carpenter. "I must wait till the sun comes out again."

He put on his jacket and walked across the park. Monsieur de Boisguilbault accompanied him, to close the gate after him. It was still light. The marquis noticed on the recently raked gravel the prints of a woman's tiny foot going to and coming from the chalet. He did not call the attention of the carpenter, who failed to notice the marks.

Meanwhile Gilberte had waited longer than she intended. The sun had set ten minutes before and the time seemed mortally long to her. As the approach of night and the fear of meeting some one from the château who might recognize her, increased her uneasiness and impatience, she ventured to leave the place where she was hiding and go down a little way toward the stream, so that she would still be near enough to recognize the carpenter. But she had not taken three steps in the open when she heard footsteps behind her, and, turning hurriedly, she saw Constant Galuchet, armed with his fishing-pole, going toward Gargilesse.

She pulled her hood over her face, but not so quickly

that the angler for gudgeons did not see a lock of golden hair, a blue eye and a rosy cheek. Moreover, it would have been very difficult for Gilberte to deceive anyone who was following her so closely. There was nothing of the peasant in her carriage, and the fustian cape was not long enough to hide the hem of a light dress and a pretty foot encased in a shapely and tight-fitting little gaiter. Constant Galuchet's curiosity was keenly aroused by this meeting. He had too much contempt for the peasant girls to make love to them on his excursions; but the sight of a young lady in disguise gave a fillip to his aristocratic curiosity, and a vague, instinctive feeling that those golden locks so difficult of concealment were Gilberte's, induced him to follow her and frighten her.

So he plodded along in her wake, sometimes walking immediately behind her, sometimes beside her, moderating or quickening his pace to defeat the little ruses to which she resorted to let him pass her and to fall behind; stopping when she stopped, leaning toward her as he brushed by, and darting inquisitive and insolent glances under her hood.

Gilberte, terrified beyond measure, looked about for some house in which she could take refuge; and seeing none she kept on in the direction of Gargilesse, hoping that the carpenter would overtake her and rid her of her troublesome escort.

But hearing no footsteps and unable to endure being followed thus, she stooped as if to look in her basket, to make her tormenter think that she had forgotten or lost something; then turned back toward the park, thinking that Galuchet, having no excuse for following her in that direction, would not have the audacity to do it.

It was too late; Constant had recognized her and an impulse of base vindictiveness took possession of him.

"Oho! my fair villager," he said, darting to her side, "what are you looking for with so much mystery? Can't I help you to find it? You don't answer! I understand: you have a nice little assignation hereabout, and I interfere with it. So much the worse for girls who wander about the country alone at night! they run the risk of meeting one gallant instead of another, and the absent are always in the wrong. Come, come, don't look at me so hard; all cats are gray in the dark, so take my arm. If we don't find the man you want, we must try to fill his place so that you won't miss him too much."

Gilberte, alarmed by this coarse talk, began to run. Being more adroit and more slender than Galuchet, she plunged in among the trees where they were thickest, and soon thought herself out of danger; but a sort of frenzy had taken possession of him when he saw her escape him so easily. In three bounds, after bumping and scratching himself a little among the branches, he was by her side once more, opposite the gate of Boisguilbault park.

Thereupon he seized her cape, saying:

"I propose to see if you are worth the trouble of chasing you in this way! If you are ugly, you have no need to run, my love, for I shall not run myself into a perspiration for you; but if you are young and pretty, you'll find yourself in difficulty, my dear!"

Gilberte struggled bravely, striking Galuchet's face and breast with her basket; but the battle was too one-sided: at the risk of wounding her with the buckle of her cape, he fiercely tore off her hood.

At this moment two men appeared at the park gate, and Gilberte, tearing herself free with a desperate effort, rushed toward them and sought protection from the one who was nearest to her. She was received in Monsieur de Boisguilbault's arms.

As she was almost fainting with fear and indignation, she hid her face on the old man's breast, and neither he nor the carpenter had time to recognize her; but when he saw Galuchet running away, all Jean's rancor against him awoke, and he rushed after him.

Monsieur Cardonnet's clerk was short and stout, and Jean, despite his age, had the advantage in build and activity. Seeing that he was on the point of being overtaken, Galuchet turned to meet him, relying on his strength.

Thereupon a struggle took place between them, and Galuchet, who was a sturdy fellow, sustained the first attack not unsuccessfully; but Jean was an athlete, and he soon brought him to the ground on the bank of the stream.

"Ah! so you are not content to play the trade of spy!" he said, putting his knees on his chest and clutching his throat so tight that the poor devil was forced to relax his hold, "but you needs must insult women, you miserable cur! I ought to crush such a venomous beast as you are; but you are such a coward that you would prosecute me for it. Well! you shan't have that pleasure; you shall leave my hands without a scratch that you can show; I will content myself with a shave that's just fit for you."

Whereupon the carpenter picked up a handful of black mud on the bank of the stream and rubbed Galuchet's face and shirt and cravat with it; then he let him go and said, standing in front of him:

"Just try to touch me, and see if I won't make you eat some of it!"

Galuchet had had altogether too rough a demonstration of the power of the carpenter's arm to expose himself to it again. He longed to throw a stone at his head when

he calmly turned his back on him. But it occurred to him that it might turn out a serious matter, and that he would have to pay dear for it, if he failed to lay him low at the first blow.

So he beat a retreat, not without pouring forth insults and threats against him and the *hussy* who had claimed his protection; but he dared not mention Gilberte's name or let it be known that he had recognized her. He was not perfectly sure that she would not eventually become his employer's daughter-in-law, for Monsieur Cardonnet had seemed terribly anxious and irresolute since Emile had been sick.

Gilberte and the marquis did not witness this scene. The girl was suffocating with excitement, and, hardly conscious of her surroundings, allowed herself to be led toward the chalet. Monsieur de Boisguilbault, sorely embarrassed by the adventure, but resolved to lend his aid like a loyal gentleman to an insulted female, dared not speak to her or let her know that he had recognized her. His distrust returned; he wondered if this scene had not been prearranged to throw the fluttering dove into his bosom: but when she fell fainting at the door of the chalet, and he saw her pallor, her glazed eyes and purple lips, he was seized with affectionate sympathy and with fierce indignation against the man who was capable of insulting a defenceless woman. Thereupon he said to himself that the noble girl had incurred that danger in order to prove to him her pride and disinterestedness. He lifted her, carried her to a chair, and said as he rubbed her icy hands:

"Have courage, Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun; be calm, I implore you! you are safe here and you are welcome."

"Gilberte!" cried the carpenter, as he entered the

room and recognized Monsieur Antoine's daughter; "my Gilberte! God in heaven! is it possible? Ah! if I had known this I wouldn't have spared the villain! but he isn't far away and I must catch him and kill him!"

Frantic with rage, he was about to go in pursuit of Galuchet, but the marquis and Gilberte, who had partly recovered consciousness, detained him. They had some difficulty, for Jean was beside himself. At last the marquis made him understand that in the interest of Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun's reputation, he should pursue his vengeance no farther.

Meanwhile the marquis continued to be exceedingly embarrassed in Gilberte's presence. She wished to go, he longed, in his heart, to have her stay, but he could not make up his mind to tell her so, except by insisting upon the necessity of her taking a little time to rest and recover from her emotion. But Gilberte was afraid of making her father and Janille anxious again, and declared that she felt quite strong enough to go. The marquis offered her his carriage; he offered ether; he looked for a phial and could not find it; he hovered about her; he tried to think of something to say to her in reply to her action and her letter; and although he lacked neither good manners nor ease of manner when his mind was once made up, he was more awkward and embarrassed than a young student making his début in society, when he was struggling with the pitiful irresolution of his character.

Finally, as Gilberte rose to take her leave with Jean, who was to escort her to Châteaubrun, he also rose, took his hat and grasped his new cane with a determined air which made the carpenter smile.

"You will allow me to accompany you too," he said.

"That scoundrel may be in ambush somewhere, and two champions are better than one."

"Let him come!" Jean whispered to Gilberte, who was on the point of declining his offer.

They left the park, and at first the marquis walked some distance behind or in front, as if to act as a guard. At last he found himself beside Gilberte, and, observing that she seemed prostrated and could hardly walk, he decided to offer her his arm. Little by little he fell into conversation with her and gradually felt more at ease. He talked at first on general subjects, then of herself more particularly. He questioned her concerning her tastes, her occupations, her reading; and although she was very modest and reserved, he soon discovered that she was endowed with superior intelligence, and that she had a very solid foundation of useful knowledge.

Impressed by this discovery, he sought to ascertain where and how she had learned so many serious things, and she admitted that she had derived the larger part of her knowledge from the library at Boisguilbault.

"I am proud and delighted to hear it," said the marquis, "and I place all my books at your disposal. I trust that you will send and ask for what you want, unless you will consent to trust me to select for you and to send you a parcel every week. Jean will consent to be our messenger until Emile can take his place again."

Gilberte sighed; she could hardly believe, in view of Emile's alarming silence, that that happy time would ever come.

"Pray lean on my arm," said the marquis; "you seem ill and you are not willing that I should assist you."

When they reached the foot of the hill of Châteaubrun, Monsieur de Boisguilbault, who seemed to have forgotten his whereabouts, began to show signs of excitement, like

a restive horse. Suddenly he stopped and gently withdrew Gilberte's arm from his and placed it in the carpenter's.

"I leave you at your door and with a devoted friend," he said. "You have no further need of me, but I carry away your promise to make use of my books."

"If only I could carry you farther with me!" said Gilberte in a supplicating tone; "I would agree never to open a book in my life, although it would be a great deprivation to me."

"Unfortunately it is impossible!" he replied with a sigh; "but time and chance bring about unexpected meetings. I hope, mademoiselle, that I do not say adieu to you forever; for that thought would be very painful to me."

He bowed and returned to his chalet, where he locked himself in and passed a portion of the night writing, arranging papers and gazing at the marchioness's portrait.

The next day, at noon, Monsieur de Boisguilbault donned his green coat, cut in the style of the Empire, his lightest wig, doe-skin breeches, gloves, and half-boots armed with short swan's-neck silver spurs. A servant, in the full dress livery of an esquire, brought him the finest horse in his stables, and, mounting himself a beast almost as perfect, followed him at a slow trot along the Gargilesse road, carrying a small casket slung over his arm by a strap.

Great was the surprise of the village folk when they saw the marquis ride within their walls, erect and stiff on his white horse, like a teacher of horsemanship of the olden time, in ceremonious costume, with gold spectacles and a gold-headed hunting-crop, which he carried somewhat like a taper. It was at least ten years since Monsieur de Boisguilbault had entered a town or a village.

The children followed him, dazzled by the magnificence of his equipment, the women rushed to their door-steps, and the men carrying burdens halted in stupefaction in the middle of the street.

He rode slowly up the precipitous thoroughfare and down on the other side to Monsieur Cardonnet's factory, being too good a horseman to indulge in imprudent antics; and, resuming the trot à la Française as he rode into the factory yard, he regulated his horse's gait so perfectly that his hoof-beats sounded like the ticking of a clock in perfect order. Certainly he still made a gallant appearance, and the women said: "You see that he is a sorcerer, for he hasn't grown a day older in the ten years since we last saw him here."

He asked for Monsieur Emile Cardonnet and found the young man in his bedroom, sitting on a sofa, with his father at his right and the doctor at his left. Madame Cardonnet was sitting opposite him, gazing anxiously into his face.

Emile was very pale, but his condition was in no wise alarming. He rose and went to meet Monsieur de Boisguilbault, who, after embracing him affectionately, bowed low to Madame Cardonnet and with less warmth to Monsieur Cardonnet. For a few moments there was no talk of aught save the invalid's health. He had had a sharp attack of fever and had been bled the night before; he had passed a comfortable night, and in the morning the fever had entirely disappeared. They were urging him to go for a drive in the cabriolet, and he was contemplating making a call upon Monsieur de Boisguilbault when that gentleman entered.

The marquis had learned all the details of his illness from the carpenter, who had carefully concealed them from Gilberte. There was no longer any ground for fear.

The doctor observed that his patient needed a good dinner, and took his leave with the remark that he should come the next day only to satisfy his conscience.

Monsieur de Boisguilbault meanwhile kept a close watch on Monsieur Cardonnet's face. He detected there an expression of triumph rather than of joy. Doubtless the manufacturer had trembled at the idea of losing his son, but, that fear being dissipated, the victory was won: Emile could endure grief.

For his part Monsieur Cardonnet examined the marquis's strange figure and considered it supremely ridiculous. His gravity and his moderation in speaking were the more annoying to him because Monsieur de Boisguilbault, being in reality more embarrassed than he chose to appear, simply made commonplace remarks in a most sententious tone. The manufacturer, after a few moments, bowed to him again and left the room to return to his business. Thereupon, Madame Cardonnet, divining from Emile's restlessness that he desired to talk with his old friend in private, left them together, after urging her son not to talk too much.

"Well," said Emile when they were alone, "you can bring me the martyr's crown! I have passed through the ordeal of fire; but God protects those who call upon him, and I have come out of it with clean hands and with no apparent burns: a little used up, to be sure, but calm and full of faith in the future. This morning, in full possession of my reasoning power and in perfect tranquillity of mind, I told my father what I had told him in the excitement, perhaps the delirium, of fever. He knows now that I shall never renounce my opinions, and that no fooling with my passion can procure him that triumph. He seems quite satisfied; for he thinks that he has succeeded in disgusting me with a marriage which he

dreaded more than the fervor of my principles. He talked this morning about distracting my thoughts, sending me abroad, to Italy. I told him that I did not wish to leave France, nor this neighborhood even, unless he turned me out of his house. He smiled, and would not contradict me, because I was bled yesterday; but to-morrow he will talk to me in the character of the stern friend, the day after to-morrow as the irritated father, and the next day as the imperious master. Don't be alarmed about me, my friend; I shall be brave, calm and patient. Whether he condemns me to exile, or keeps me with him to torture me, I will show him that love is very strong when it is inspired by enthusiasm for the true, and sustained by the ideal."

"Emile," said the marquis, "I know through your friend Jean all that has taken place between your father and yourself, also the great victory that your heart has won. My mind was at rest before I came here."

"I knew, my friend, that you had become reconciled with that simple-hearted but admirable man. He told me that you were coming to see me; I was expecting you."

"Did he tell you nothing more?" said the marquis, gazing intently at Emile.

"No, nothing more, I assure you," Emile replied, with the emphasis of perfect sincerity.

"He did well to keep his promise," rejoined Monsieur de Boisguilbault; "you were too much excited by fever to endure fresh emotion. I have undergone violent emotions myself since we last met, but I am satisfied with the result, and I will tell you what it is. But not yet, Emile; you are too pale, and I am not sure enough of myself as yet. Don't come and see me to-day; I have other places to go to, and perhaps I will see you again

when I return this way to-night. Will you promise me to eat some dinner and take care of yourself—in a word, to get well?"

"I promise, my friend. If I only could send word to the woman I love that, on resuming the free exercise of my life and my faculties, I find my love more ardent and more absolute than ever in the depths of my heart."

"Very well, Emile, write a few lines; not enough to tire you. I will come again to-night, and, if she doesn't live too far away, I will undertake to send your letter to her."

"Alas! my friend, I cannot tell you her name; but if the carpenter would take charge of it, now that I have recovered my strength and am no longer watched every moment, I could write."

"Write then, seal your letter, and do not address it. The carpenter is working for me, and he shall have the letter before night."

While the young man was writing, Monsieur de Boisguilbault left the room and asked to speak with Monsieur Cardonnet. He was told that he had just driven away in his cabriolet.

"Do you know where I can find him?" asked the marquis, half convinced by this hurried departure.

He had not said where he was going, but they thought to Châteaubrun, as he had taken that road, and as he had been there the week before.

Upon receiving this reply, Monsieur de Boisguilbault displayed surprising activity. He returned to Emile's room, took the letter, felt his pulse, found that he was a little excited, mounted his horse, and rode out of the village quietly as he had come. But he urged his horse to a gallop as soon as he was on level ground.

XXXV

ABSOLUTION

Meanwhile Monsieur Cardonnet had arrived at Châteaubrun, and was in presence of Gilberte, her father and Janille.

"Monsieur de Châteaubrun," he said, taking a seat with perfect self-possession amid those three persons, who were filled with consternation by a visit which boded fresh unhappiness, "you know doubtless all that has taken place between my son and myself with regard to mademoiselle your daughter. My son has had the good taste and the good sense to choose her for his wife. Mademoiselle, and you, monsieur, have had the extreme kindness to accept his attentions, without any very definite knowledge as to whether I approve them."

At this point Janille made an angry gesture, Gilberte lowered her eyes and turned pale, and Monsieur Antoine flushed and opened his mouth to interrupt Monsieur Cardonnet. But he, giving him no time to do so, continued thus:

"I did not approve of this union at first, I agree: but I came here, I saw mademoiselle, and I yielded—on very mild and simple conditions. My son is ultra-democratic in his notions, and I am a moderate conservative. I foresaw that his exaggerated opinions would ruin his intellect and his credit. I demanded that he should abandon them and return to judicious and decent ideas.

I thought that I could easily obtain that sacrifice. I rejoiced over it in anticipation; I announced it to you as indubitable in a letter addressed to mademoiselle; but, to my great surprise, Emile persists in his madness, and sacrifices to it a love which I believed to be deeper and more devoted. I am forced, therefore, to tell you that he renounced mademoiselle's hand irrevocably this morning, and I thought it my duty to inform you immediately, in order that, being fully aware of his intentions and my own, you should have no ground for accusing me of irresolution and imprudence. Whether it seems fitting to you now to authorize his love and to permit his attentions, is for you to say; I wash my hands of it."

"Monsieur Cardonnet," said Antoine, who had risen, "I know all this, and I know, also, that you never lack fine phrases to make sport of us; but I say that, if you are so well informed, it is because you sent spies into our house and lackeys to insult us by revolting offers for my daughter's hand. You have already caused us much distress by your diplomacy, and we request you, without ceremony, to stop where you are. We are not simple enough not to understand that you do not propose to unite your wealth with our poverty at any price. We have not been deceived by your devious manœuvres, and when you invented the extraordinary scheme of placing your son between a moral submission, which is impossible so far as his opinions are concerned, and a marriage to which you would not have consented, even if he had been willing to descend to falsehood, we swore that we would have no falsehood and no dissimulation between him and you and ourselves. Allow me to tell you, therefore, that we know very well what it befits us to do; that I am quite as well able to protect my daughter's honor and dignity as you are to protect your

son's wealth, and that I have no occasion for advice or lessons from anybody in that regard."

Having spoken thus with a firmness which Monsieur Cardonnet was far from expecting on the part of the *old sot of Châteaubrun*, Monsieur Antoine resumed his seat and looked the manufacturer in the eye. Gilberte felt as if she were dying; but she thought it her duty to support with her pride the just pride of her father. She too looked Monsieur Cardonnet in the face, and her glance seemed to confirm all that Monsieur Antoine had said.

Janille, unable to contain herself any longer, deemed it her duty to speak.

"Never fear, monsieur," she said, "we can get along very well without your name. We have one which is quite as good; and as for the matter of money, we had more glory in losing what we had than you in making what you didn't have."

"I know, Mademoiselle Janille," retorted Monsieur Cardonnet, with the artificial calmness of profound contempt, "that you are very proud of the name Monsieur de Châteaubrun has bestowed on your daughter. For my own part, I would not have been so proud, and would have closed my eyes to certain irregularities of birth; but I can imagine that the fortune of a plebeian, acquired by hard labor, may seem contemptible to a person born, as you apparently were, in the splendors of idleness. It only remains for me to wish you all much joy, and to ask mademoiselle's pardon for having caused her some slight grief. My wrongdoing was unintentional, but I think that I can atone for it by a bit of sound advice: remember that young people who venture to make free with the wishes of their parents are sometimes intoxicated by an ephemeral caprice rather than inspired by an enduring

passion. Emile's conduct with regard to her proves what I say, I think, and I am a little ashamed for him."

"Enough, Monsieur Cardonnet, enough, do you hear?" exclaimed Monsieur Antoine, really angry for the first time in his life: "I should blush to have so much wit as you, if I made so unworthy a use of it as to insult a young girl, and outrage her father in her presence. I trust that you understand me, and that——"

"Monsieur Antoine! Mademoiselle Janille!" cried Sylvain Charasson, rushing into the room; "here's Monsieur de Boisguilbault coming to see you! as true as the sun's shining! it's Monsieur de Boisguilbault! I saw his white horse and his yellow spectacles!"

This unexpected news excited Monsieur de Châteaubrun so that he forgot all his anger, and overwhelmed by a sort of childish delight mingled with terror, he went out with faltering step to meet his old friend.

But as he was about to throw himself into his arms, he was petrified with dread and, as it were, paralyzed by the marquis's impassive face and his courteous but sad salute. Trembling and heart-broken, Monsieur Antoine seized his daughter's arm in a convulsive grasp, uncertain whether he should push her toward Monsieur de Boisguilbault as a pledge of reconciliation, or send her away as a crushing proof of his sin.

Janille, completely bewildered, courtesied again and again to the marquis, who glanced absent-mindedly in her direction and bowed almost imperceptibly to her.

"Monsieur Cardonnet," he said, as he stood in the door of the square pavilion face to face with the manufacturer, who came out last, "I fancy that you are going away, and I came here expressly to meet you. You left your house just as I went to look for you, and I hurried after you. I beg you therefore to remain a little while,

and to be good enough to give me your attention for a few moments."

"We will talk somewhere else, monsieur le marquis," replied Cardonnet, "for I cannot stay here any longer: suppose we go down to the foot of the mountain?"

"No, monsieur, no, permit me to insist: what I have to say is of some importance, and everybody here must hear it. It seems clear to me that I have not arrived soon enough to prevent some unpleasant explanations; but you are a man of affairs, Monsieur Cardonnet, and you know that it is the custom to summon a family council upon matters of serious importance at which momentous interests are discussed coolly, even when the participants bring to the council some little passion in the depths of their hearts. Monsieur le Comte de Châteaubrun, I beg you to detain Monsieur Cardonnet—it is quite essential. I am old and ill, I may not have the strength to come here again, to take such a journey. You are young men compared with me; I ask you therefore to be calm and considerate and to spare me much fatigue. Will you refuse me?"

The marquis spoke this time with an ease and grace which made him an entirely different man from him whom Monsieur Cardonnet had seen an hour earlier. He was conscious of a feeling of curiosity, not unmixed with a prudent regard for his own interests. Monsieur de Châteaubrun requested him to remain, and they all returned to the pavilion, with the exception of Janille, to whom Monsieur Antoine made a sign, and who took her place behind the kitchen door to listen.

Gilberte was uncertain whether she ought to go in or remain outside; but Monsieur de Boisguilbault offered her his hand with much courtesy, and, leading her to a chair, sat down near her, at some distance from her father and Emile's.

"To proceed in order, and in accordance with the respect due to ladies," he began, "I will first address myself to Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun.—Mademoiselle, I made my will last night, and I have come here to inform you as to its provisions and conditions; but I should be glad not to be refused this time, and I shall not have the courage to read you this scrawl unless you will promise not to be angry. You also laid down certain conditions in a letter which I have here and which caused me much pain. However, I consider them just, and I understand your unwillingness to accept the most trivial gift from a man whom you consider your father's enemy. In order to prevail upon you, therefore, it is necessary that this hostility should come to an end, and that monsieur your father should forgive me for whatever wrong I may have done him.—Monsieur de Châteaubrun," he said, rising with heroic courage, "you injured me many years ago; I retaliated by withdrawing my friendship from you without any explanation. We should either have fought or forgiven each other. We did not fight, but for twenty years we have been strangers, which is a more serious matter to two men who have been much attached to each other. I forgive you the wrong you did me, will you forgive me?"

"Oh! marquis!" cried Monsieur Antoine, rushing to him and bending his knee before him, "you never wronged me in any way. You were my best friend. You were like a father to me, and I insulted you mortally. I would have offered my bare breast to you if you would have run me through with your sword, and I would never have raised my hand against you. You did not choose to take my life, but you punished me much more cruelly by withdrawing your friendship from me. And now you offer me your forgiveness. I receive it on my knees, in

presence of my friends and my enemies, since this humiliation is the only reparation I can offer you. You, Monsieur Cardonnet," he said, rising and eying the manufacturer from head to foot, "are at liberty to sneer at what you cannot understand; but I do not offer my bare breast and my arm without a weapon to everybody, as you will soon know."

Monsieur Cardonnet also had risen, darting threatening glances at Monsieur Antoine. The marquis placed himself between them and said to Antoine:

"Monsieur le comte, I do not know what has taken place between Monsieur Cardonnet and you; but you have offered me a reparation which I reject. I choose to believe that there was wrong on both sides, and I wish to see you not at my feet but in my arms; but since you consider that you owe me an act of submission which my age justifies, I require you, before I embrace you, to be reconciled to Monsieur Cardonnet, and to take the first step in that direction."

"Impossible!" cried Antoine, convulsively pressing the marquis's arm, half in joy, half in anger. "Monsieur has just spoken to my daughter in a most insulting way."

"No, that cannot be," said the marquis; "there has been a misunderstanding. I am acquainted with Monsieur Cardonnet's sentiments; his character is inconsistent with an act of cowardice. Monsieur Cardonnet, I am certain that you are as familiar with the point of honor as any nobleman; and you have just seen two noblemen, who had cruelly wounded each other, become reconciled before your eyes, without blushing for their mutual concessions. Be generous, and prove to us that it is not the name that makes nobility. I bring you words of peace and means of reconciliation. Permit me to put your hand in Monsieur de Châteaubrun's. Come; you

won't refuse an old man on the verge of the grave. Mademoiselle Gilberte, come to my aid; say a word to your father."

The phrase *means of reconciliation* had echoed loudly in Monsieur Cardonnet's ear. His penetrating mind had already guessed a part of the truth. He thought that he would be obliged to yield, and that it would be better to carry off the honors of war than to undergo the necessity of capitulation.

"My intentions were very different from what Monsieur de Châteaubrun supposes," he said, "and there has always been in my thoughts so much respect and esteem for mademoiselle his daughter, that I do not hesitate to disavow any words of mine that can possibly be interpreted otherwise. I beg Mademoiselle Gilberte to be convinced of my sincerity, and I offer her father my hand as a pledge of the oath I take."

"Enough, monsieur, let us say no more about it!" said Monsieur Antoine, taking his hand; "let us part without hard feeling. Antoine de Châteaubrun has never known what it is to lie."

"That is true," thought Monsieur de Boisguilbault; "if he had been more cunning, I should have been blind —and happy, like so many others. —I thank you, Antoine," he said aloud, in a trembling voice. "Now, come and embrace me!"

The count's embrace was passionate and enthusiastic; the marquis's calm and constrained. He was playing a part beyond his strength; he turned pale, trembled, and was forced to sit down. Antoine sat beside him, his breast shaken with sobs. Gilberte knelt in front of the marquis and covered his hands with kisses, weeping with joy and gratitude.

All this display and emotion disgusted the manufac-

turer, who looked on with a cold, supercilious eye, awaiting the *means of reconciliation.*

At last Monsieur de Boisguilbault drew them from his pocket and read them in a clear, distinct voice.

He set forth in a few clear, concise words that he possessed about four million and a half francs; that he gave, by contract, two millions to Mademoiselle Gilberte de Châteaubrun, on condition that she married Monsieur Emile Cardonnet, and two millions to Monsieur Emile Cardonnet, on condition that he married Mademoiselle Gilberte de Châteaubrun, both of said gifts to take effect at Monsieur de Boisguilbault's death, but to be void unless the marriage should be celebrated within six months. Monsieur de Boisguilbault reserved the usufruct of these four millions during his own life, but he gave five hundred thousand francs outright to the future husband and wife, said gift to be effectual on their wedding-day. The said last-named sum, however, was to be given to Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun for her own use if she did not marry Monsieur Emile Cardonnet.

A feeble cry was heard behind the door; it was Janille, fainting with joy in Sylvain Charasson's arms.

XXXVI

RECONCILIATION

Gilberte had no comprehension of what was happening to her; she had no idea of what a fortune of four millions was, and the thought of such a burden imposed upon a life so simple and happy as hers would have caused her more fear than joy; but she realized that her union with Emile had become a possibility once more, and, being unable to speak, she pressed Monsieur de Boisguilbault's hand convulsively in her own. Antoine was completely bewildered to find his daughter so rich. His joy was no greater than hers, but he saw in the marquis's conduct such an overwhelming proof of his forgiveness, that he believed that he must be dreaming and could find nothing to say to him.

Cardonnet was the only person present who really understood what it was to have four millions and a half fall into the laps of his future grandchildren. However, he did not lose his head, but listened impassively to the reading of the will, and, not choosing to appear to humble himself before the power of gold, he said coldly:

"I see that Monsieur de Boisguilbault is determined that the father's will shall bow before that of the friend; but Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun's poverty has never seemed to me a serious obstacle to this marriage. There is another which is much more repugnant to me, namely, that she is a natural child, and that there is every reason

to believe that her mother—I will not call her by name—occupies an inferior position in society."

"You are in error, Monsieur Cardonnet," rejoined Monsieur de Boisguilbault, firmly. "Mademoiselle Janille's morals have always been beyond reproach, and, in my opinion, you do wrong to despise a person so loyal and devoted to the objects of her affection. But the truth demands that I set you right in this respect. I solemnly assure you, monsieur, that Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun is of unmixed noble blood, if that fact will give you any pleasure. I will even say that I knew her mother intimately, and that she was of as good a family as my own. Now, Monsieur Cardonnet, have you any other objection to make? Do you think that Mademoiselle de Châteaubrun's character can possibly inspire repugnance or suspicion in any one?"

"Most assuredly not, monsieur le marquis," Cardonnet replied; "and yet I hesitate still. It seems to me that the paternal authority and dignity are impaired by such a contract; that my consent seems to be purchased for a money consideration; and, while I had but one ambition for my son, to see him acquire wealth by his labor and his talent, I see that you raise him to the very apex of fortune, with a life of inaction and idleness before him."

"I hope that it will not be so," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault. "My reason for choosing Emile for my heir is that I am confident that he will not resemble me in any way, and that he will be able to make a better use of wealth than I have done."

Cardonnet simply desired an excuse for yielding. He said to himself that, by refusing, he should alienate his son forever, and that, by consenting with a good grace, he might recover enough influence over him to teach him

artistically. But, by way of ribbon, the bouquet was tied with the necklace of diamonds which Gilberte had returned; and, to take the place of the shawl, which the marquis had not deemed it advisable to produce again, he had put two rows instead of one in the necklace.

"Oho! two or three thousand francs in addition to what the contract calls for!" thought Monsieur Cardonnet, pretending to look at the diamonds with indifference.

"Now," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault to Gilberte, "you can refuse me nothing, as I have done what you wished. I suggest that you and your father take your carriage—the same barrow that was so useful to me and that procured me the happiness of your acquaintance. We will go to Gargilesse. I fancy that Monsieur Cardonnet desires to present his daughter-in-law to his wife, and, for my part, I am most anxious that my heiress should win her heart."

Monsieur Cardonnet welcomed the suggestion eagerly, and they were about to start when Emile appeared. He had learned that his father had gone to Châteaubrun; he dreaded some new plot against his happiness and Gilberte's peace of mind. He had leaped upon his horse, and forgetting his loss of blood, his fever and his promises to the marquis, he arrived at the ruins, trembling, breathless, and oppressed by the gloomiest forebodings.

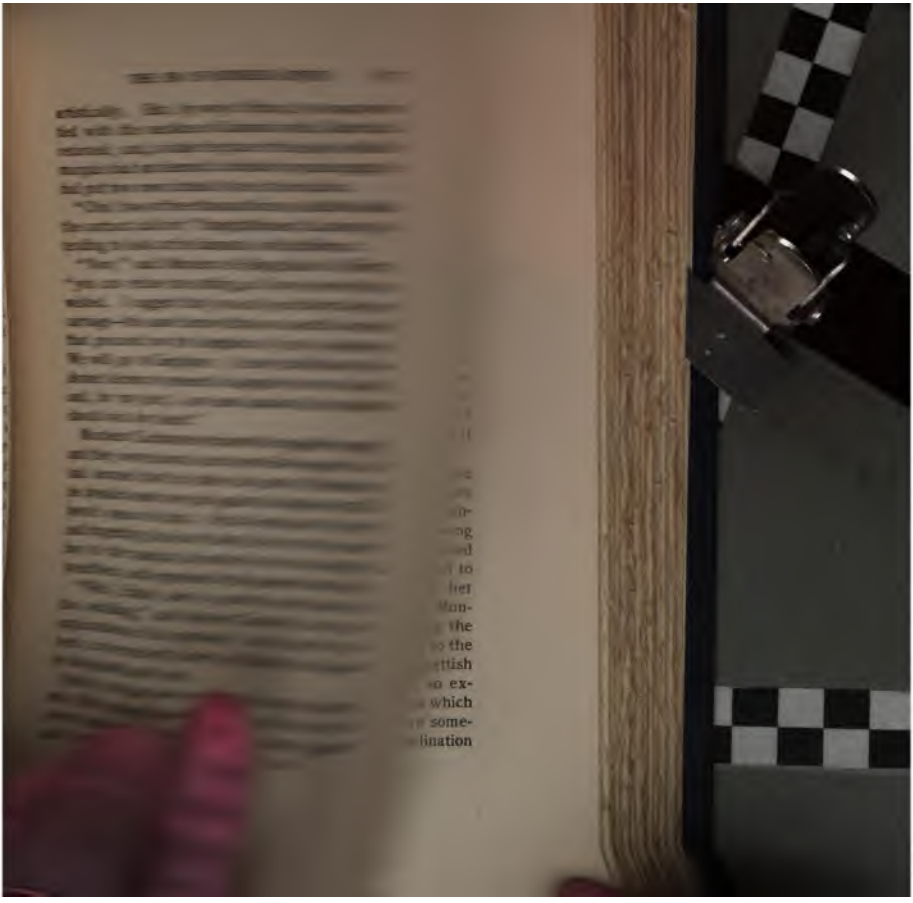
"Well, Emile, here is your wife already dressed for the wedding," said Monsieur Cardonnet, divining the explanation of his imprudence. And he pointed to Gilberte, covered with flowers and diamonds, on Monsieur de Boisguilbault's arm.

Emile, whose nerves were terribly tense and agitated, was like one thunderstruck amid all the miracles that burst upon him at once. He tried to speak, staggered and fell fainting in Monsieur Antoine's arms.

to use his wealth according to his, the father's ide
that is to say, he reckoned that, with four millions
hand, he might some day have forty; and he was c
vinced that no man, even a saint, can suddenly find h
self the possessor of four millions without taking a lik
to wealth. "He will make a fool of himself at firs
he thought, "and will throw away part of his treasu
and, when he sees that it is growing less, he will
so frightened that he will try to make up the deficit;
then, as appetite comes to those who consent to eat
will want to multiply it by two, by ten, by a hund
With my help, he and I may be the kings of the finar
world some day."

"I have no right," he said at last, "to refuse the
tune offered to my son. I would do it if I could, bec
the whole transaction is contrary to my opinions an
ideas; but the right of property is a sacred law.
soon as my son receives such a gift, he is a prop
holder. I should rob him by refusing my assent
conditions laid down. I am bound, therefore, to h
peace forever concerning all that offends my conv
in this extraordinary arrangement; and, since I a
pelled to yield, I desire, at all events, to do it gr
especially as Mademoiselle Gilberte's beauty
and noble character flatter my egotism by
happiness to my family."

"As we are all agreed," said Monsieur d
bault, rising and making a signal through th
"I will beg Mademoiselle Gilberte, who has, l
a fondness for flowers, to accept the betrotha
The marquis's groom entered and put dow
casket he had brought. Monsieur de Boisg
from it a bouquet of the rarest and most fra
old Martin had spent more than an hour



Happiness rarely kills; Emile soon returned to life and bliss. Janille rubbed his temples with vinegar, Gilberte held his hand in hers, and, that nothing might be lacking in his joy, his mother, too, was there when he opened his eyes. Made acquainted very recently, by Emile's delirium, with his passion for Gilberte, she had made Galuchet tell her the whole story, and, learning that her husband had gone to Châteaubrun, and that her son had ridden thither notwithstanding his condition, and foreseeing some terrible storm, she had driven at full speed to the ruins, defying for the first time her husband's wrath, and the bad roads, to which she paid no heed. She fell in love with Gilberte at the first words they exchanged, and if the young girl felt some alarm at the thought of entering a family of which Cardonnet was the head, she was sure that she should find some compensation in his wife's loving heart and gentle nature.

"As we are all together," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault, with a grace of which no one would have believed him capable, "we must pass the rest of the day together and dine somewhere. There are too many of us not to cause Mademoiselle Janille some embarrassment here, and if we should return to Gargilesse we might take Monsieur Cardonnet's butler unawares. If you will all do me the honor to come to Boisguilbault, which, by the way, is much nearer, we shall find there the materials for dining, I think. Perhaps Monsieur Cardonnet will take some interest in becoming acquainted with his children's property, we will draw up their marriage contract there and appoint a day for the wedding."

This new evidence of the marquis's complete conversion was received with great warmth. Janille asked but five minutes to make *mademoiselle's* toilet, for she

thought that she should be ceremoniously attired for the occasion, but Gilberte greeted with a hearty kiss what she called a joke on the part of her fond mother.

Meanwhile, the Cardonnet family inspected the ruins, and Monsieur de Boisguilbault retired with Antoine to the pavilion to rest. No one heard their conversation. Neither of them ever divulged its subject. Did they exchange delicate and seemingly impossible explanations? It is hardly probable. Did they agree never thereafter to make the slightest allusion to their long feud, and to take up their friendship just where they had dropped it? It is certain that, from that moment, they talked together of the past without bitterness, and referred to former years with pleasure, sometimes blended with emotion and with merriment. But it was noticeable that these reminiscences never went beyond a certain date—that of Monsieur de Boisguilbault's marriage—and that the name of the marchioness was never mentioned between them. It was as if she had never existed.

When Gilberte returned, dressed as handsomely as she was able or wished to be, Emile was overjoyed to see that she had put on the lilac dress, which one more washing by Janille had made almost pink, and which, owing to the miracles of her economy and skill, still seemed fresh. She had braided her long hair, which reached to the ground, and in that superb *abandon* reminded her happy lover of the scorching day at Crozant. Of Monsieur de Boisguilbault's gifts she had retained only the bouquet and the cornelian ring, which she showed to the marquis with an affectionate smile. She was coquettish with him, coquettish with the heart, if we may so express it; and while the deference and consideration which she manifested toward Monsieur Cardonnet were somewhat forced, she yielded ingenuously to the inclination

to treat the marquis, in her manner and in her thoughts, as if he were Emile's father.

As they were about to start, Monsieur de Boisguilbault took Janille's hand and invited her to drive with him, as courteously as if she had been Gilberte's mother. He was so far from being offended by hearing them call each other *mother* and *my girl*, that that close attachment had suddenly inspired in him a great esteem and secret gratitude for the old woman who had submitted to so much slander and vulgar jesting rather than reveal to anybody on earth, even friend Jappeloup—whom the marquis had for so long a time believed to be Antoine's confidant and messenger,—the secret of Gilberte's birth.

Monsieur Cardonnet could not restrain a disdainful smile at this invitation.

"Monsieur Cardonnet," said Monsieur de Boisguilbault in an undertone, remarking that smile, "you will know and appreciate that woman when you see how she brings up your grandchildren."

The park of Boisguilbault was thrown open for the first time in its history to a party invited by the owner. The chalet too was thrown open, with the exception of the study, the door of which was securely fastened, thanks to Jappeloup.

The imposing melancholy of the château, the curious beauty of the furniture, the magnificence of the park, and the noticeable air of good breeding in the service, caused Monsieur Cardonnet some vexation. He had done his utmost at Gargilesse to exclude parvenu manners from his household, and amid the ruins of Châteaubrun, where he had felt that he was a personage of consequence, he had not been very ill at ease. But he seemed very small indeed amid the mixture of opulence and severe simplicity that characterized Boisguilbault. He tried, by *liberal*

reflections, to prevent the marquis from thinking that he was dazzled by his old-fashioned splendor. Monsieur de Boisguilbault, who did not lack cunning beneath his awkwardness, and who had waited until that moment to put before him the most distasteful of his demands, answered him calmly and coincided with his opinions. Cardonnet expressed great surprise, for, in common with everybody else, he supposed that the marquis had retained all the pride of his caste and clung to the absurd principles of the Restoration. As he could not refrain from expressing his astonishment, Monsieur de Boisguilbault said to him gently:

"You do not know me, Monsieur Cardonnet; I am as much opposed to distinctions and privileges as yourself. I believe that all men are equal in rights and in worth, when they are honorable and virtuous."

At that moment, dinner was announced, and, as they were about to take their places, Master Jean Jappeloup, cleanly shaved and in his Sunday clothes, came out of the chalet, and playfully pushing Emile aside, took Gilberte's hand to lead her to the table.

"It is my right," he said; "you know I promised to be your witness and your best man, Emile."

Everybody welcomed the carpenter joyfully, except Monsieur Cardonnet, who dared not however display less liberality under the circumstances than the old marquis; so he contented himself with a satirical smile as he saw him take his place at the family banquet. He submitted to everything, promising himself that he would change his tone when the marriage was consummated.

The dinner, served under the old trees in the park, was magnificent with flowers and exquisite in respect to the dishes; and old Martin, whom his master had forewarned early in the morning, surpassed himself in superintending

the service. Sylvain Charasson was admitted to the honor of working under his orders that day, and he will talk about it all his life.

The first moments were rather constrained. But little by little the faction of the contented and happy triumphed over that of the discontented,—which consisted of Monsieur Cardonnet alone and he was half reconciled,—the table became more animated, and at dessert Monsieur Cardonnet said to Emile, with a smile: "*We marquises*——"

Shall we speak of the happiness of Emile and Gilberte? Happiness cannot be described, and even lovers themselves lack words with which to depict it. When it was night, Monsieur and Madame de Cardonnet took their leave, graciously authorizing Emile to escort his fiancée to Châteaubrun, on condition that he should keep his father's cabriolet, and not ride again that day. Monsieur Antoine, absorbed in a joyful conversation with his friend Jean, wandered about the park, and Janille, beginning to tire of playing the lady, satisfied her craving for action by assisting Martin to put everything in order. Thereupon, Monsieur de Boisguilbault took Emile's arm and Gilberte's and led them to the cliff where he had first opened his heart to his young friend.

"My children," he said to them, "I have made you rich, because it was necessary to do it in order to overcome the obstacles that separated you, and because it was the only means of making you happy. My will was made a long while ago, but last night I rewrote it. My purpose remains what it was: I believe that Emile knows it and that Gilberte will respect it. I have determined that, in the future, this great estate shall be used to found a *commune*, and in my first will I tried to provide a plan for it, and to lay its foundations. But the plan might

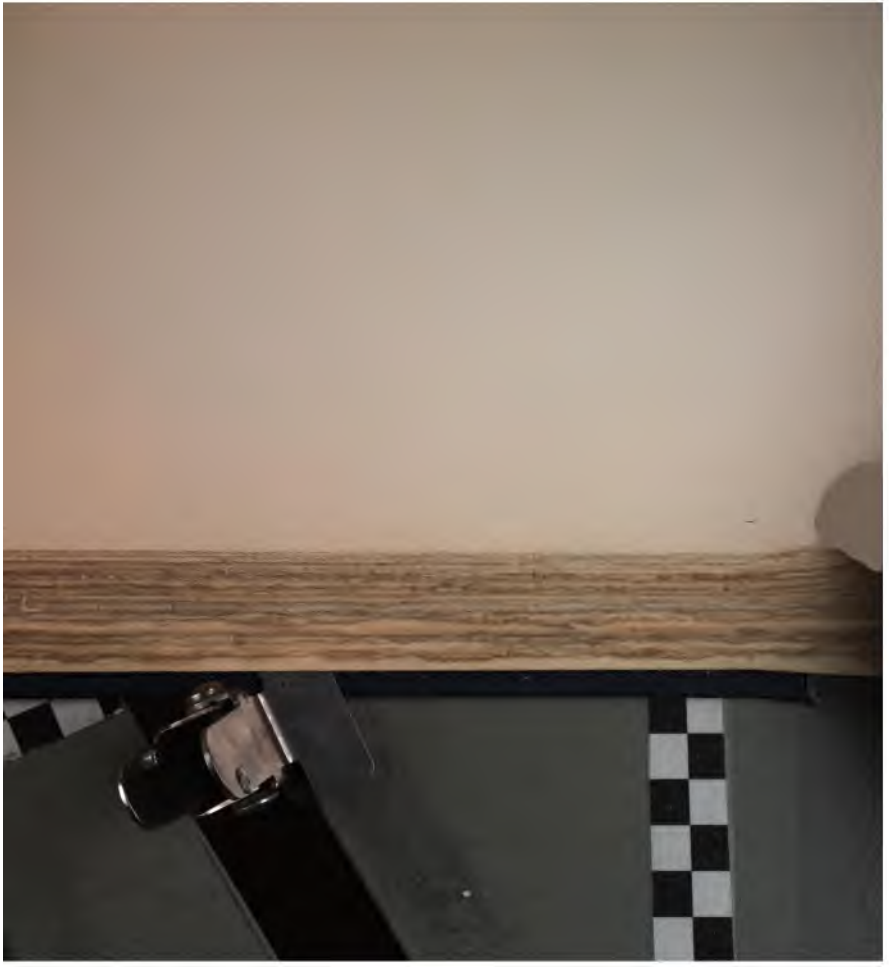
well be defective and the foundations unsubstantial; I do not regret my work, because I have always felt that it was weak and that I am of all men on earth the man least capable of planning and carrying out. Providence came to my aid by sending Emile to me to take my place in realizing my plans, and I had recently made him my sole trustee and the executor of my will. But such a disposition of my property would have made it impossible to obtain Monsieur Cardonnet's consent, and I destroyed it when I determined that you two should marry. Official documents have not the value commonly attributed to them, and the law has never found the means of fettering the conscience. That is why I am much more tranquil in my mind when I simply tell you what I wish and receive your promise, than I should be if I bound you by chains so fragile as those of the provisions of a will. Do not answer, my children! I know your thoughts, I know your hearts. You have been subjected to the harshest of all tests, that of abandoning the idea of being united or of abjuring your opinions; you have come out of it triumphantly; I rely absolutely upon you and I leave the future in your hands. It is your intention to put your opinions in practice, Emile, and I furnish you with the instruments; but that does not mean that you have the ability as yet. For that you need knowledge of social science, and that is the result of long-continued labor to which you will apply yourself with the aid of the forces which your generation, not mine, will develop more or less successfully, as God wills. It may be that you will not see my plans come to maturity, my children; perhaps your children will; but, in bequeathing you my wealth, I bequeath you my heart and my faith. You will bequeath it to others, if you have to pass through a phase in the existence of mankind which makes it im-

practicable for you to found the establishment advantageously. But Emile once said something that impressed me. One day when I asked him what he would do with an estate like mine, he answered: *'I would try!'* Let him try then, and, after careful reflection, after a careful study of reality, may he who has always dreamed of the salvation of mankind in the organization and development of agricultural science, find the means of transition which will prevent a deplorable break in the chain between the past and the future!

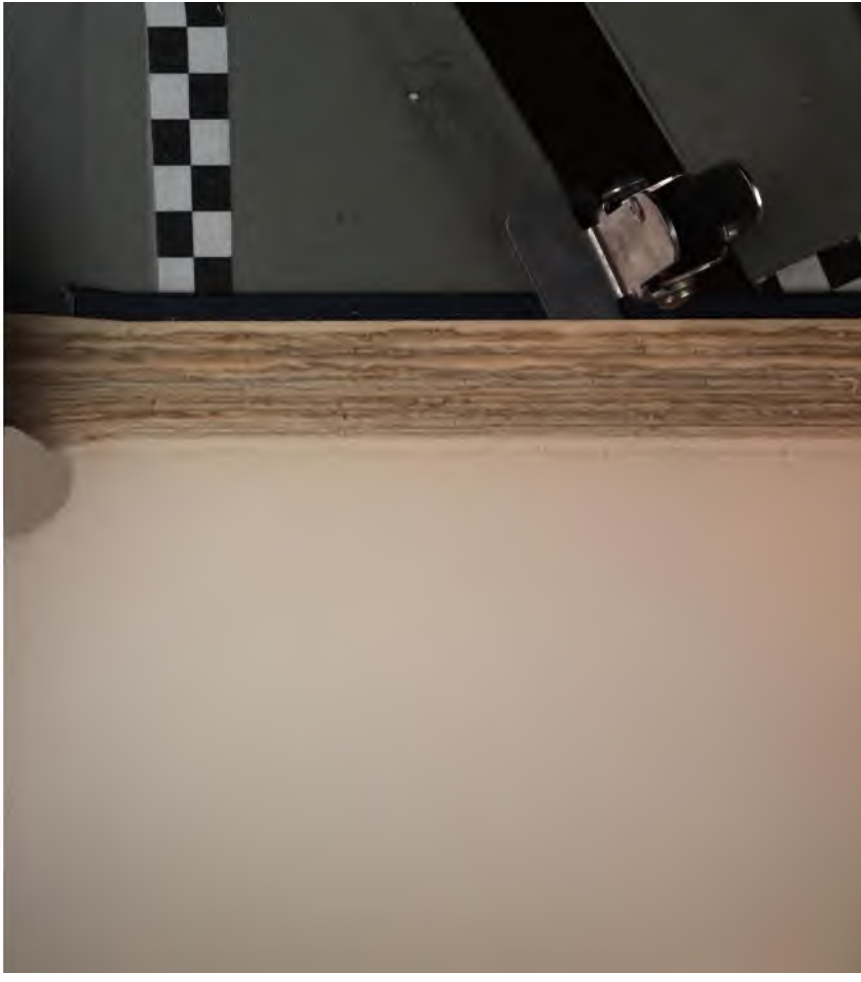
"I trust to his intelligence because it has its source in the heart. May God give you genius, Emile, and may He give it to the men of your time! for the genius of one man is almost nothing. For my part, I have nothing more to do but to fall asleep peacefully in my grave. If I am privileged to live a few days with you two, I shall have begun to live on the eve of my death. But I shall not have lived in vain, indolent, disheartened and useless as I have been, if I have found the man who can and will act in my place.

"Keep the secret of my opinions and our plans until after your marriage, and even until after the new and thorough education which Emile must make it his duty to acquire. I aspire to see you free and powerful, in order that I may die at peace. And after all, my children, whatever course you may take, whatever errors you may commit, whatever success may crown your efforts, I confess that it is impossible for me to be anxious concerning the future of the world. In vain will the tempest rage over the generations now born or to be born; in vain will error and falsehood labor to perpetuate the horrible confusion which certain minds call to-day, in derision apparently, social order; in vain will wickedness wage war on earth; eternal truth will have its day at last.

And if my spirit is able to return, a few centuries hence, to visit this immense heritage and glide beneath the venerable trees that my hand planted, it will see men free, happy, equal, united, that is to say, just and wise! These shaded paths where I have walked so often, oppressed by ennui and sorrow, whither I have fled in horror from the presence of the men of to-day, will shelter then, like the arched roof of a divine temple, a numerous family kneeling to pray and bless the Author of nature and the Father of mankind! This will be the *garden of the commune*, that is to say, its gynæceum, its festal and banqueting hall, its theatre and its church; for speak not to me of the cramped spaces where stone and cement pen up men and thought; nor of your superb colonnades and magnificent squares, in comparison with this natural architecture, of which the Supreme Creator bears all the expense! I have expressed in the trees and flowers, in the brooks, in the cliffs and fields all the poetry of my thoughts. Do not rob the old planter of his illusion, if illusion it be. He still believes in the adage that God is in everything and that Nature is His temple!"



LEONE LEONI



INTRODUCTION

Being at Venice, in very cold weather and under very depressing circumstances, the carnival roaring and whistling outside with the icy north wind, I experienced the painful contrast which results from inward suffering, alone amid the wild excitement of a population of strangers.

I occupied a vast apartment in the former Nasi palace, now a hotel, which fronts on the quay, near the Bridge of Sighs. All travellers who have visited Venice know that hotel, but I doubt if many of them have ever happened to be there on Mardi Gras, in the heart of the classic carnival city, in a frame of mind so painfully meditative as mine.

Striving to escape the spleen by forcing my imagination to labor, I began at hazard a novel which opened with a description of the locality, of the festival out-of-doors and of the solemn apartment in which I was writing. The last book I had read before leaving Paris was *Manon Lescaut*. I had discussed it, or rather listened to others discussing it, and I had said to myself that to make Manon Lescaut a man and Desgrieux a woman would be worth trying, and would present many tragic opportunities, vice being often very near crime in man, and enthusiasm closely akin to despair in woman.

I wrote this book in a week and hardly read it over

before sending it to Paris. It had answered my purpose and expressed my thoughts; I could have added nothing to it if I had thought it over. And why should a work of the imagination need to be thought over? What moral could we expect to deduce from a fiction which everyone knows to be quite possible in the world of reality? Some people who are very rigid in theory—no one knows just why—have pronounced it a dangerous book. After the lapse of twenty years, I look it over, and can detect no such tendency in it. The Leone Leoni type, although not untrue to life, is exceptional, thank God! and I do not see that the infatuation he inspires in a weak mind is rewarded by very enviable joys. However, I have, at the present moment, a well-fixed opinion concerning the alleged *morals* of the novel, and I have expressed elsewhere my deliberate ideas thereon.

GEORGE SAND.

Nohant, January, 1853.

I

We were at Venice. The cold and the rain had driven the promenaders and the masks from the square and the quays. We could hear naught save the monotonous voice of the Adriatic in the distance, breaking on the islands, and from time to time the shouts of the watch aboard the frigate which guards the entrance to Canal Saint-George, and the answering hail from the custom-house schooner. It was a fine carnival evening inside the palaces and theatres, but outside, everything was dismal, and the street-lights were reflected in the streaming pavements, where the hurried footstep of a belated masker, wrapped in his cloak, echoed loudly from time to time.

We were alone in one of the rooms of the old Nasi palace, to-day transformed into a hotel, the best in Venice. A few candles scattered about the tables, and the blaze on the hearth only partially lighted the enormous room, and the flickering of the flame seemed to make the allegorical divinities painted in fresco on the ceiling move to and fro. Juliette was indisposed, and had refused to go out. Lying on a sofa and half-covered by a fur cloak, she seemed to be dozing; and I walked back and forth noiselessly on the thick carpet, smoking *Serraglio* cigarettes.

We recognize in my country a certain state of the mind which is, I think, peculiar to Spaniards. It is a sort of serious tranquillity which does not exclude activity of thought, as among the Teutonic races and in the cafés of the Orient. Our intellect does not grow dull during the trances in which we are buried. When we walk to and fro with measured step for hours at a time, on the same line of mosaics, without swerving a hair's breadth and puffing away at our cigars—that is the time when the operation that we may call mental digestion takes place most easily. Momentous resolutions are formed at such times, and excited passions calm down and give birth to vigorous acts. A Spaniard is never calmer than when he is meditating some scheme; it may be sinister or it may be sublime. As for myself, I was digesting my plan; but there was nothing heroic or alarming about it. When I had made the circuit of the room about sixty times and smoked a dozen cigarettes, my mind was made up. I halted by the sofa, and said to my young companion, regardless of her sleep:

"Juliette, will you be my wife?"

She opened her eyes and looked at me without answering. I thought that she had not heard me, and I repeated my question.

"I heard you very plainly," she replied in an indifferent tone—then held her peace anew.

I thought that my question had displeased her, and my anger and grief were terrible; but, from respect for Spanish gravity, I manifested neither, but began to pace the floor again.

At the seventh turn Juliette stopped me, saying: "What is the use?"

I made three turns more; then I threw away my cigarette, and, drawing a chair to her side, sat down.

"Your position in society must distress you?" I said to her.

"I know," she replied, raising her exquisite face and fixing upon mine her blue eyes wherein apathy seemed to be always at odds with melancholy,—"yes, I know, my dear Aleo, that I am branded in society with an ineffaceable designation, that of kept mistress."

"We will efface it, Juliette; my name will purify yours."

"Pride of the grandee!" she rejoined with a sigh. Then, turning suddenly to me and seizing my hand, which she put to her lips in spite of me, she added: "Do you really mean that you will marry me, Bustamente? O my God! my God! what comparisons you force me to make!"

"What do you mean, my dear child?" I asked her. She did not reply, but burst into tears.

These tears, of which I understood the cause only too well, hurt me terribly. But I concealed the species of frenzy which they aroused in me and returned to my seat by her side.

"Poor Juliette!" I said to her; "will that wound bleed forever?"

"You gave me leave to weep," she replied; "that was the first of our agreements."

"Weep, my poor afflicted darling," I said; "then listen and answer me."

She wiped away her tears and put her hand in mine.

"Juliette," I said to her, "when you speak of yourself as a kept woman, you are mad. Of what consequence are the opinions and coarse remarks of a few fools? You are my friend, my companion, my mistress."

"Alas! yes," she said, "I am your mistress, Aleo, and it is that that dishonors me; I should have chosen to die

rather than to bequeath to a noble heart like yours the possession of a half extinct heart."

"We will rekindle the ashes gradually, my Juliette; let me hope that they still hide a spark which I can find."

"Yes, yes, I hope so, I wish that it may be so!" she said eagerly. "So I shall be your wife? But why? Shall I love you better for it? Will you feel surer of me?"

"I shall know that you are happier and I shall be happier for that reason."

"Happier! you are mistaken; I am as happy with you as possible; how can the title of Donna Bustamente make me any happier?"

"It would put you out of reach of the insolent disdain of society."

"Society!" said Juliette; "you mean your friends. What is society? I have never known. I have passed through life and made the tour of the globe, but have never been able to discover what you call society."

"I know that you have lived hitherto like the enchanted maiden in her globe of crystal, and yet I have seen you shed bitter tears over the deplorable position in which you then were. I made an inward vow to offer you my rank and my name as soon as I should be assured of your affection."

"You failed to understand me, Don Aleo, if you thought that shame made me weep. There was no place in my heart for shame; there were enough other causes of sorrow to fill it and make it insensible to everything that came from without. If he had continued to love me, I should have been happy, though I had been covered with infamy in the eyes of what you call society."

It was impossible for me to restrain a shudder of wrath; I rose to pace the floor. Juliette detained me. "Forgive me," she said in a trembling voice, "forgive me for the pain I cause you. It is beyond my strength always to avoid speaking of him."

"Very well, Juliette," I said, stifling a painful sigh, "pray speak of him if it is a relief to you! But is it possible that you cannot succeed in forgetting him, when everything about you tends to direct your thoughts toward another life, another happiness, another love?"

"Everything about me!" said Juliette excitedly; "are we not in Venice?"

She rose and walked to the window; her white silk petticoat fell in numberless folds about her graceful form. Her chestnut hair escaped from the long pins of chased gold which only half confined it, and bathed her back in a flood of perfumed silk. She was so lovely with the faint touch of color in her cheeks, and her half loving, half bitter smile, that I forgot what she said and went to her to take her in my arms. But she had drawn the curtains partly aside, and looking through the glass, as the moon's moist beams were beginning to break through the clouds, she cried: "O Venice! how changed thou art! how beautiful thou once wert in my eyes, and how desolate and deserted thou dost seem to-day!"

"What do you say, Juliette?" I cried in my turn; "have you been in Venice before? Why have you never told me?"

"I saw that you wanted to see this beautiful city, and I knew that a word would have prevented you from coming here. Why should I have made you change your plan?"

"Yes, I would have changed it," I replied, stamping my foot. "Even if we had been at the very gate of this

infernal city, I would have caused the boat to steer for some shore enchanted by that memory; I would have taken you there, I would have swum with you in my arms, if I had had to choose between such a journey and this house, where perhaps you will find at every step a burning trace of his passage! But tell me, Juliette, where in heaven's name I can take refuge with you from the past? Mention some city, tell me of some corner of Italy to which that adventurer has not dragged you in his train!"

I was pale and trembling with wrath; Juliette turned slowly, gazed coldly at me, and said, turning her eyes once more to the window: "Venice, we loved thee in the old days, and to-day I cannot look on thee without emotion, for he was fond of thee, he constantly invoked thy name in his travels, he called thee his dear fatherland; for thou wert the cradle of his noble family, and one of thy palaces still bears the name that he bears."

"By death and eternity!" I said to Juliette, lowering my voice, "we leave this dear fatherland to-morrow!"

"You may leave Venice and Juliette to-morrow," she replied with frigid sang-froid; "but, as for me, I take orders from no one, and I shall leave Venice when I please."

"I believe that I understand you, mademoiselle," I said indignantly: "Leoni is in Venice."

Juliette started as if she had received an electric shock.

"What do you say? Leoni in Venice?" she cried, in a sort of frenzy, throwing herself in to my arms; "repeat what you said; repeat his name, let me at least hear his name once more!"

She burst into tears, and, suffocated by her sobs, almost lost consciousness. I carried her to the sofa, and without thinking of offering her any further assistance,

began to pace the edge of the carpet once more. But my rage subsided as the sea subsides when the sirocco folds its wings. A bitter grief succeeded my excitement; and I fell to weeping like a woman.

II

In the midst of this heart-rending agitation, I paused a few steps from Juliette and looked at her. Her face was turned to the wall, but a mirror fifteen feet high, which formed the panel, enabled me to see her face. She was pale as death and her eyes were closed as in sleep; there was more weariness than pain in the expression of her face, and that expression accurately portrayed her mental plight: exhaustion and indifference triumphed over the last ebullition of passion. I hoped.

I called her name softly and she looked at me with an air of amazement, as if her memory lost the faculty of retaining facts at the same time that her heart lost the power to feel anger.

"What do you want," she said, "and why do you wake me?"

"Juliette," I replied, "I offended you; forgive me; I wounded your heart."

"No," she said, putting one hand to her forehead and offering me the other, "you wounded my pride only. I beg you, Aleo, remember that I have nothing, that I live on your gifts, and that the thought of my dependent state humiliates me. You are kind and generous to me, I know. You lavish attentions on me, you cover me with

[illegible], you overwhelm me with your luxury and your magnificence; but for you I should have died in some paupers' hospital, or should be confined in a madhouse. I know all that. But remember, Bustamente, that you have done it all in spite of me, that you took me in half-dead, and that you succored me when I had not the slightest desire to be succored; remember that I wanted to die, and that you passed many nights at my pillow, holding my hands in yours to prevent me from killing myself; remember that I refused for a long time your protection and your benefactions, and that, if I accept them to-day, it is half from weakness and discouragement, half from affection and gratitude to you, who ask me on your knees not to spurn them. Yours is the noblest rôle, my friend, I know it well. But am I to blame because you are kind? Can I be seriously reproached for debasing myself when, alone and desperate, I confide myself to the noblest heart on earth?"

"My beloved," I said, pressing her to my heart, "you reply most convincingly to the vile insults of the miserable wretches who have misrepresented you. But why do you say this to me? Do you think that you need to justify yourself in the eyes of Bustamente for the happiness you have bestowed upon him—the only happiness he has ever enjoyed in his life? It is for me to justify myself, if I can, for I am the one who has done wrong. I know how stubbornly your pride and your despair resisted me; I am not likely ever to forget it. When I assume a tone of authority with you, I am a madman whom you must pardon, for my passion for you disturbs my reason and vanquishes all my strength of mind. Forgive me, Juliette, and forget a moment of anger. Alas! I am unskilful in winning love. I have a natural roughness of manner which is unpleasant to you. I

wound you when I am beginning to cure you, and I often destroy in one hour the work of many days."

"No, no, let us forget this quarrel," she interposed, kissing me. "For the little pain you cause me, I cause you a hundred times as much. You are sometimes imperious; my grief is always cruel. Do not believe, however, that it is incurable. Your kindness and your love will conquer it at last. I should have a most ungrateful heart if I did not accept the hope that you point out to me. We will talk of marriage another time; perhaps you will induce me to consent to it. However, I confess that I dread that species of servitude consecrated by all laws and all prejudices; it is honorable, but it is indissoluble."

"Still another cruel remark, Juliette! Are you afraid, pray, to belong to me forever?"

"No, no, of course not. Do not be distressed, I will do what you wish; but let us drop the subject for to-day."

"Very well, but grant me another favor in place of that; consent to leave Venice to-morrow."

"With all my heart. What do I care for Venice and all the rest? In heaven's name, don't believe me when I express regret for the past; it is irritation or madness that makes me speak so! The past! merciful heaven! Do you not know how many reasons I have for hating it? See how it has shattered me! How could I have the strength to grasp it again if it were given back to me?"

I kissed Juliette's hand to thank her for the effort she made in speaking thus, but I was not convinced; she had given me no satisfactory answer. I resumed my melancholy promenade about the room.

The sirocco had sprung up and dried the pavement in

an instant. The city had become resonant once more as it ordinarily is, and the thousand sounds of the festival reached our ears: the hoarse song of the tipsy gondoliers, the hooting of the masks coming from the cafés and gaying the passers-by, the plash of oars in the canal. The guns of the frigate bade good-night to the echoes of the lagunes, which made answer like a discharge of artillery. The Austrian drum mingled its brutal roll, and the bell of St. Mark's gave forth a doleful sound.

A ghastly depression seized upon me. The candles, burning low, set fire to their green paper ruffles and cast a livid light upon the objects in the room. Everything assumed imaginary forms and made imaginary noises, to my disturbed senses. Juliette, lying on the sofa and swathed in fur and silk, seemed to me like a corpse wrapped in its shroud. The songs and laughter out of doors produced upon me the effect of shrieks of distress, and every gondola that glided under the marble bridge below my window suggested the idea of a drowning man struggling with the waves and death. Finally, I had none but thoughts of despair and death in my head, and I could not raise the weight which was crushing my breast.

At last, however, I succeeded in calming myself and reflected somewhat less wildly. I admitted to myself that Juliette's cure was progressing very slowly, and that, notwithstanding all the sacrifices in my favor which gratitude had wrung from her, her heart was almost as sick as at the very first. This long-continued and bitter regret for a love so unworthily bestowed seemed inexplicable to me, and I sought the cause in the powerlessness of my affection. It must be, I thought, that my character inspires an insurmountable repugnance which she

dares not avow to me. Perhaps the life I lead is unpleasant to her, and yet I have made my habits conform to hers. Leoni used to take her constantly from city to city. I have kept her travelling for two years, forming no ties anywhere, and never delaying for an instant to leave the place where I detected the faintest sign of ennui on her face. And yet she is melancholy, that is certain; nothing amuses her, and it is only from consideration for me that she deigns sometimes to smile. Not one of the things that ordinarily give pleasure to women has any influence on this sorrow of hers; it is a rock that nothing can shake, a diamond that nothing can dim. Poor Juliette! What strength in your weakness! what desperate resistance in your inertia!

I had unconsciously raised my voice until I expressed my troubles aloud. Juliette had raised herself on one arm and was listening to me sadly, leaning forward on the cushions.

"Listen to me," I said, walking to her side, "I have just imagined a new cause for your unhappiness. I have repressed it too much, you have forced it back into your heart too much, I have dreaded like a coward to see that sore, the sight of which tears my heart; and you, through generosity, have concealed it from me. Your wound, thus neglected and abandoned, has become more inflamed every day, whereas I should have dressed it and poured balm upon it. I have done wrong, Juliette. You must show me your sorrow, you must pour it out in my bosom, you must talk to me about your past sufferings, tell me of your life from moment to moment, name my enemy to me. Yes, you must. Just now you said something to me that I shall not forget; you implored me to let you hear his name at least. Very well! let us pronounce it

together, that accursed name that burns your tongue and your heart. Let us talk of Leoni."

Juliette's eyes shone with an involuntary gleam. I felt a terrible pang; but I conquered my suffering and asked her if she approved my plan.

"Yes," she said with a serious air, "I believe that you are right. You see, my breast is often filled with sobs; the fear of distressing you keeps me from giving them vent, and I pile up treasures of grief in my bosom. If I dared to display my feelings before you, I believe that I should suffer less. My sorrow is like a perfume that is kept always confined in a tightly closed box; open the box and it soon escapes. If I could talk constantly about Leoni and tell of the most trivial incidents of our love, I should bring under my eyes at the same moment all the good and all the harm he did me; whereas your aversion often seems to me unjust, and in the secret depths of my heart I make excuses for injuries which, if told by another, would be revolting to me."

"Very well," said I, "I desire to learn them from your mouth. I have never known the details of this distressing story; I want you to tell them to me, to describe your whole life. When I am better acquainted with your troubles, perhaps I shall be better able to relieve them. Tell me all, Juliette; tell me by what means this Leoni succeeded in making you love him so dearly; tell me what charm, what secret he possessed; for I am weary of seeking in vain the impracticable road to your heart. Say on, I am listening."

"Ah! yes, I am glad to do it; it will give me some relief at last. But let me talk and do not interrupt me by any sign of pain or anger; for I shall tell things as they happened; I shall tell the good and the bad, how I have loved and how I have suffered."

"You must tell everything, and I will listen to everything," I replied.

I ordered fresh candles to be brought and rekindled the fire.

Juliette spoke thus:

III

You know that I am the daughter of a rich jeweller of Brussels. My father was skilful in his trade, but had little cultivation otherwise. He had raised himself from the position of a common workman to that of possessor of a handsome fortune which his flourishing business increased from day to day. Despite his lack of education, he was on terms of intimacy with the richest families in the province; and my mother, who was pretty and clever, was well received in the opulent society of the tradespeople.

My father was naturally mild and apathetic. Those qualities became more marked each day, as his wealth and comfort increased. My mother, being more active and younger, enjoyed unlimited freedom of action, and joyfully made the most of the advantages of wealth and the pleasures of society. She was kind-hearted, sincere and full of amiable qualities, but she was naturally frivolous, and her beauty, which was treated with marvellous respect by the years as they passed, prolonged her youth at the expense of my education. She loved me dearly, beyond question, but without prudence or discernment. Proud of my youthful charms and of the trivial talents

which she had caused me to acquire, she thought of nothing but taking me about and exhibiting me; she took a delicious but perilous pride in covering me constantly with new jewels, and in appearing with me at parties. I recall those days with pain and yet with pleasure; since then, I have reflected sadly on the futile employment of my early years, and yet I sigh for those days of careless happiness which should never have ended or never have begun. I fancy that I can still see my mother with her plump, graceful figure, her white hands, her black eyes, her coquettish smile, and withal so kind that you could see at the first glance that she had never known anxiety or vexation, and that she was incapable of imposing the slightest restraint upon others, even with kindly intentions. Ah! yes, I remember her well! I remember our long mornings devoted to planning and preparing our ball dresses, our afternoons employed in making our toilets with such painstaking care that hardly an hour remained to show ourselves on the promenade. I see my mother, with her satin dresses, her furs, her long white feathers, and the whole fluffy mass of lace and ribbons. After finishing her toilet, she would forget herself a moment to look after me. It was a great deal of a bore to unlace my black satin boots in order to smooth out a wrinkle on the instep or to try on twenty pairs of gloves before finding one of a shade sufficiently delicate for her taste. Those gloves fitted so tight that I often tore them after taking the greatest pains about putting them on; then I must begin anew, and we would have heaps of débris in front of us before we had finally selected those that I was to wear an hour, and then leave to my maid. However, I had become so accustomed from childhood to regard these trifling details as the most important occupations of a woman's life, that I submitted patiently. We would set

out at last, and at the rustling of our silk gowns and the perfume exhaled by our handkerchiefs, people would turn to look after us. I was accustomed to hearing our names mentioned as we passed, by all sorts and conditions of men, and to see them glance curiously at my impassive face. This mixture of coldness and innocent effrontery constitutes what is called good breeding in a young woman. As for my mother, she felt a twofold pride in exhibiting herself and her daughter; I was a reflection, or, to speak more accurately, a part of herself, of her beauty, of her wealth; her good taste was displayed in my costume; my face, which resembled hers, reminded her as well as others of the scarcely impaired freshness of her early youth; so that, seeing my slender figure walking at her side, she fancied that she saw herself twice over, pale and delicate as she had been at fifteen, brilliant and beautiful as she still was. Not for anything in the world would she have gone out without me; she would have seemed to herself to be incomplete, half dressed as it were.

After dinner, the solemn discussion concerning ball dresses, silk stockings and flowers began anew. My father, who gave his whole attention to his shop during the day, would have preferred to pass the evening quietly by his fireside; but he was so easy-going, that he did not notice the way in which we deserted him. He would fall asleep in his chair while our hair-dressers were striving to understand my mother's scientifically devised plans. As we were going away, we would rouse the worthy man from his slumbers and he would go obligingly and take from his strong-box magnificent jewels mounted according to his own designs. He would fasten them himself about our arms and necks and take pleasure in remarking their effect. These jewels were intended for

sale. We often heard envious women about us crying out at their splendor and whispering spiteful jests; but my mother consoled herself by saying that the greatest ladies wore what we had cast off, and that was true. They would come to my father next day and order jewels like those we had worn. A few days later he would send the self-same ones; and we did not regret them, for they were always replaced by others more beautiful.

Amid such surroundings, I grew up without thought for the present or the future, without making any effort to form or strengthen my character. I was naturally gentle and trustful like my mother; I was content to float along as she did on the current of destiny. I was less vivacious, however; I felt less keenly the attractions of pleasure and vanity; I seemed to lack the little strength that she had, the desire and the faculty of constant diversion. I accepted so easy a lot knowing nothing of its price, and without comparing it with any other. I had no idea of passion. I had been brought up as if I were never to know it; my mother had been brought up in the same way and considered that she was to be congratulated; for she was incapable of feeling passion and had never had any occasion to fight against it. My intelligence had been applied to studies in which the heart had no occasion to exercise control over itself. I performed brilliantly on the piano, I danced beautifully, I painted in water-colors with admirable precision and vigor; but there was within me no spark of that sacred fire which gives life and enables one to understand life. I loved my parents, but I did not know what it was to love in any other way than that. I was wonderfully clever in inditing a letter to one of my young friends; but I had no more idea of the value of words than of sentiments. I loved my girl friends as a matter of habit, I was good to them because

I was obliging and gentle, but I did not trouble myself about their characters; I scrutinized nothing. I made no well-reasoned distinction between them; I was fondest of the one who came oftenest to see me.

IV

I was the sort of person I have described, and sixteen years old, when Leoni came to Brussels. The first time I saw him was at the theatre. I was with my mother in a box near the balcony, where he sat with several of the richest and most fashionable young men in the city. My mother called my attention to him. She was constantly lying in wait for a husband for me, and always looked for him among the men with the finest figures and the most gorgeous clothes; those two points were everything in her eyes. Birth and fortune attracted her only as accessories of things that she considered much more important—dress and manners. A man of superior mind in a simple coat would have inspired nothing but contempt in her. Her future son-in-law must have cuffs of a certain style, an irreproachable cravat, an exquisite figure, a pretty face, coats made in Paris, and a stock of that meaningless twaddle which makes a man fascinating in society.

As for myself, I made no comparison between one man and another. I blindly entrusted the selection to my parents, and I neither dreaded nor shrank from marriage.

My mother considered Leoni fascinating. It is true that his face is wonderfully beautiful, and that he has the

[illegible] animated and perfectly at ease with his [illegible] and manners. But I felt some of those [illegible] which give to ardent hearts a [illegible] of their destiny. I glanced at him for a moment in obedience to my mother, and should not have looked at him a second time, had she not forced me to do so by her constant exclamations and by her manifest curiosity to know his name. A young man of our acquaintance, whom she summoned in order to question him, informed her that he was a noble Venetian, a friend of one of the leading merchants of the city, that he seemed to have an enormous fortune, and that his name was Leone Leoni.

My mother was delighted with this information. The merchant who was Leoni's friend was to give a party the very next day, to which we were invited. Frivolous and credulous as she was, it was enough for her to have learned vaguely that Leoni was rich and noble, to induce her to cast her eyes upon him instantly. She spoke to me about him the same evening, and urged me to be pretty the next day. I smiled and went to sleep at precisely the same hour as on other nights, without the slightest acceleration of my heart beats at the thought of Leoni. I had become accustomed to listen without emotion to the formation of such projects. My mother declared that I was so sensible that they were not called upon to treat me like a child. The poor woman did not realize that she herself was much more of a child than I.

She dressed me with so much care and magnificence that I was proclaimed queen of the ball; but at first the time seemed to have been wasted: Leoni did not appear, and my mother thought that he had already left Brussels. Incapable of controlling her impatience, she asked the master of the house what had become of his Venetian.

"Ah!" said Monsieur Delpech, "you have noticed my

Venetian already, have you ?"—He glanced with a smile at my costume, and understood.—"He's an attractive youngster," he said, "of noble birth, and very much in fashion both in Paris and London; but it is my duty to inform you that he is a terrible gambler, and that the reason that you don't see him here is that he prefers the cards to the loveliest women."

"A gambler!" said my mother; "that's very bad."

"Oh! that depends," rejoined Monsieur Delpech. "When one has the means, you know!"

"To be sure!" said my mother; and that remark satisfied her. She worried no more about Leoni's passion for gambling.

A few seconds after this brief interview, Leoni appeared in the salon where we were dancing. I saw Monsieur Delpech whisper to him and glance at me, and Leoni's eyes wander uncertainly about me, until, guided by his friend's directions, he discovered me in the crowd and walked nearer to see me more distinctly. I realized at that moment that my rôle as a marriageable maiden was somewhat absurd; for there was a touch of irony in the admiration of his glance, and, for the first time in my life perhaps, I blushed and had a feeling of shame.

This shame became a sort of dull pain when I saw that Leoni had returned to the card room after a few moments. It seemed to me that I was laughed at and disdained, and I was vexed with my mother on that account. That had never happened before and she was amazed at the ill-humor I displayed toward her.—"Well, well," she said to me, with a little irritation on her side, "I don't know what the matter is with you, but you are turning homely. Let us go."

She had already risen when Leoni hurriedly crossed the room and invited her to waltz; that unhoped-for inci-

dent restored all her good-humor; she laughingly tossed me her fan and disappeared with him in the whirl.

As she was passionately fond of dancing, we were always accompanied to balls by an old aunt, my father's older sister, who acted as my chaperon when I was not invited to dance at the same time as my mother. Mademoiselle Agathe—that was what we called my aunt—was an old maid of a cold and even disposition. She had more common sense than the rest of the family, but she was not exempt from the tendency to vanity, which is the reef upon which all parvenus go to pieces. Although she cut a very melancholy figure at a ball, she never complained of the necessity of accompanying us; it was an opportunity for her to display in her old age some very beautiful gowns which she had never had the means to procure in her youth. She set great store by money therefore; but she was not equally accessible to all the seductions of society. She had a hatred of long standing for the nobles, and she never lost an opportunity to decry them and turn them to ridicule, which she did with much wit.

Shrewd and penetrating, accustomed to inaction and to keeping close watch on the actions of other people, she had understood the cause of my little fit of spleen. My mother's effusive chatter had apprised her of her views concerning Leoni, and the Venetian's face, amiable and proud and sneering, all at once, disclosed to her many things that my mother did not understand.

"Look, Juliette," she said, leaning toward me, "there's a great nobleman making sport of us."

I felt a painful thrill. What my aunt said corresponded with my forebodings. It was the first time that I had seen contempt for our bourgeoisie plainly written on a man's face. I had been brought up to laugh at the contempt

which the women hardly concealed from us, and to look upon it as an indication of envy; but hitherto our beauty had preserved us from the disdain of the men, and I thought that Leoni was the most insolent creature that ever lived. I had a horror of him, and when, after bringing my mother back to her seat, he invited me for the following contradance, I haughtily declined. His face expressed such amazement that I understood how confidently he reckoned upon a warm reception. My pride triumphed and I sat down beside my mother, declaring that I was tired. Leoni left us, bowing low after the Italian manner, and bestowing upon me a curious glance in which there was a touch of his characteristic mockery.

My mother, amazed at my action, began to fear that I might be capable of having a will of my own. She talked to me gently, hoping that in a short time I would consent to dance, and that Leoni would ask me again, but I persisted in remaining in my seat. An hour or more later we heard Leoni's name several times amid the confused murmuring of the ball; some one passing near us said that he had lost six hundred louis.

"Very fine!" said my aunt dryly; "he will do well to look out for some nice girl with a handsome dowry."

"Oh! he doesn't need to do that," somebody else replied, "he is so rich!"

"Look," said a third, "there he is dancing; he doesn't look very anxious."

Leoni was dancing, in fact, and his features did not display the slightest concern. He accosted us again, paid my mother some insipid compliments with the facility of a man in the best society, and then tried to make me speak by putting questions to me indirectly. I maintained an obstinate silence and he walked away with an indifferent air. My mother was in despair and took me home.

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cut a very melancholy figure at a ball, sh
plained of the necessity of accompanying
opportunity for her to display in her old ag
beautiful gowns which she had never had t
procure in her youth. She set great stor
therefore; but she was not equally accessib
seductions of society. She had a hatred of l
for the nobles, and she never lost an opportu
them and turn them to ridicule, which she d
wit.

Shrewd and penetrating, accustomed to i
keeping close watch on the actions of oth
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mother's effusive chatter had apprised h
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proud and sneering, all at once, di
things that my mother di did not und

"Look, Juliette," she s
a great nobleman making

I felt a painful thrill.
with my forebodings. It
contempt for our bourgeo
face. I had been brought

For the first time she scolded me and I sulked. My aunt upheld me and declared that Leoni was an impertinent fellow and a scoundrel. My mother, who had never been opposed to such a point, began to weep, and I did the same.

By such petty agitations did the coming of Leoni, and the unhappy destiny that he brought, begin to disturb the profound peace in which I had always lived. I will not tell you with so much detail what happened on the following days. I do not remember so well, and the insatiable passion that I conceived for him always seems to me like a strange dream which no effort of my reason can reduce to order. This much is certain, that Leoni was visibly piqued, surprised and disconcerted by my coldness, and that he began at once to treat me with a respect which satisfied my wounded pride. I saw him every day at parties or out walking, and my aversion to him speedily vanished before the extraordinary civilities and humble attentions with which he overwhelmed me. In vain did my aunt try to put me on my guard against the arrogance of which she accused him. I was no longer capable of feeling insulted by his manners or his words; even his face had lost that suggestion of sarcasm which had offended me at first. His glance acquired from day to day an indescribable gentleness and affectionateness. He seemed to think of nothing but me; he even sacrificed his taste for card-playing, and passed whole nights dancing with my mother and me or talking with us. He was soon invited to call at our house. I dreaded his call a little. My aunt prophesied that he would find in our home a thousand subjects of ridicule which he would pretend not to notice but which would furnish him with material for joking with his friends. He came, and, to cap the climax, my father, who was standing at his shop-

door, brought him into the house that way. That house, which belonged to us, was very handsome, and my mother had had it decorated with exquisite taste; but my father, who took no pleasure in anything outside of his business, was unwilling to transfer to any other building his cases of pearls and diamonds. That curtain of sparkling jewels behind the glass panels which guarded it was a magnificent spectacle, and my father said truly enough that there could be no more splendid decoration for a ground-floor. My mother, who had had hitherto only transitory flashes of ambition to be allied to the nobility, had never been humiliated to see her name carved in huge letters just below the balcony of her bedroom. But when, from that balcony, she saw Leoni cross the threshold of the fatal shop, she thought that we were lost and looked anxiously at me.

V

During the few days immediately preceding this, I had had the revelation of a hitherto unknown pride. I felt it awake within me now, and, impelled by an irresistible impulse, I determined to watch Leoni's manner as he talked with my father in his counting-room. He was slow about coming upstairs, and I rightly inferred that my father had detained him, to show him, as was his ingenuous custom, the marvels of his workmanship. I went resolutely down to the shop and entered, feigning surprise to find Leoni there. My mother had always forbidden me to enter the shop, her greatest fear being

that I should be taken for a shopgirl. But I sometimes slipped away to go down and kiss my poor father, who had no greater joy than to receive me there. When I entered he uttered an exclamation of pleasure and said to Leoni: "Look, look, monsieur le baron, what I have shown you amounts to nothing; here is my loveliest diamond." Leoni's face betrayed the keenest delight; he smiled at my father with emotion and at me with passion. Never had such a glance met mine. I became red as fire. An unfamiliar feeling of joy and passion brought a tear to the brink of my eyelid as my father kissed me on the forehead.

We stood a few seconds without speaking; then Leoni, taking up the conversation, found a way to say to my father everything that was most likely to flatter his self-esteem as an artist and tradesman. He seemed to take extreme pleasure in making him explain the process by which rough stones were transformed into precious gems, brilliant and transparent. He said some interesting things on that subject himself, and, addressing me, gave me some mineralogical information that was within my reach. I was confounded by the wit and grace with which he succeeded in exalting and ennobling our condition in our own eyes. He talked to us about products of the goldsmith's art which he had seen in his travels, and extolled especially the works of his compatriot Cellini, whom he placed beside Michael Angelo. In short, he ascribed so much merit to my father's profession and praised his talent so highly that I almost wondered whether I was the daughter of a hard-working mechanic or a genius.

My father accepted this last hypothesis, and, being charmed with the Venetian's manners, took him up to my mother. During this visit, Leoni displayed so much

wit and intelligence, and talked upon every subject in such a superior way that I was fairly fascinated as I listened to him. I had never conceived the idea of such a man. Those who had been pointed out to me previously as the most attractive were so insignificant and vapid beside him that I thought I must be dreaming. I was too ignorant to appreciate all Leoni's knowledge and eloquence, but I understood him instinctively. I was dominated by his glance, enthralled by his tales, surprised and fascinated by every new resource that he developed.

It is certain that Leoni is a man endowed with extraordinary faculties. In a few days he succeeded in arousing a general infatuation throughout the city. He has all the talents, commands all the means of seduction. If he were present at a concert, after a little urging he would sing or play upon any instrument with a marked superiority over the professional musicians. If he consented to pass the evening in the privacy of some family circle, he would draw lovely pictures in the women's albums. In an instant he would produce a portrait full of expression, or a vigorous caricature; he improvised or declaimed in all languages; he knew all the character dances of Europe, and he danced them all with fascinating grace; he had seen, remembered, appreciated and understood everything; he read the whole world like a book that one carries in one's pocket. He acted admirably in tragedy or comedy; he organized companies of amateurs; he was himself leader of the orchestra, star performer, painter, decorator and scene-shifter. He was at the head of all the sports and all the parties. It could truly be said that pleasure walked in his footprints, and that, at his approach, everything changed its aspect and assumed a new face. He was listened to with enthusiasm and blindly obeyed; people believed in him as a prophet;

and if he had promised to produce spring in midwinter, they would have deemed him capable of doing it. After he had been in Brussels a month, the character of the people had actually changed. Pleasure united all classes, soothed all the tender susceptibilities, brought all ranks to the same level. It was nothing but riding-parties, fireworks, theatricals, concerts and masquerades. Leoni was magnificent and generous; the workmen would have risen in revolt for him. He scattered favors about with lavish hand, and found money and time for everything. His caprices were soon adopted by everybody. All the women loved him, and the men were so subjugated by him that they did not think of being jealous of him.

How, amid such infatuation, could I remain insensible to the glory of being distinguished by the man who made fanatics of a whole province! Leoni overwhelmed us with attentions and surrounded us with respectful homage. My mother and I had become the leaders of society in the city. We walked by his side at all the entertainments; he assisted us to display the most insane splendor; he designed our dresses and invented our fancy costumes; for he understood everything and at need would have made our gowns and our turbans himself. By such means did he take possession of the affections of the whole family. My aunt was the most difficult conquest. She held out for a long while and distressed us by her discouraging remarks.—Leoni was a man of evil habits, she said, a frantic gambler, who won and lost the fortune of twenty families every evening; he would devour ours in a single night. But Leoni undertook to soften her, and succeeded by laying hold of her vanity, that lever which he worked so vigorously while seeming only to touch it lightly. Soon there were no obstacles left. My

hand was promised him, with a dowry of half a million. My aunt suggested that we should have more certain information concerning the fortune and rank of this foreigner. Leoni smiled and promised to furnish his patents of nobility and his title deeds within three weeks. He treated the matter of the marriage contract very lightly, but it was drawn with the utmost liberality toward him and confidence in him. He seemed hardly to know what I was to bring him. Monsieur Delpech, and, upon the strength of his assurance, all Leoni's new friends, declared that he was four times richer than we were, and that his marriage to me was a love-match. I readily allowed myself to be persuaded. I had never been deceived, and I never thought of forgers and blacklegs except as in the rags of poverty and the livery of degradation.

A wave of painful emotion almost suffocated Juliette. She paused and looked at me with a dazed expression.

"Poor child!" I said, "God should have protected you."

"Oh!" she rejoined, contracting her ebon eyebrows, "I used two terrible words; may God forgive me! I have no hatred in my heart, and I do not accuse Leoni of being a villain; no, no, for I do not blush for having loved him. He is an unfortunate man whom we should pity. If you knew—— But I will tell you all."

"Go on with your story," I said to her; "Leoni is guilty enough; you have no intention of accusing him more than he deserves."

Juliette resumed her narrative.

It is a fact that he loved me, loved me for myself; the sequel proved that clearly enough. Do not shake your head, Bustamente. Leoni's is a powerful body, animated by a vast mind; all the virtues and all the vices, all the

passions, holy and guilty alike, find a place in it at the same time. No one has ever chosen to judge him impartially; he was quite right in saying that I alone have known him and done him justice.

The language that he used to me was so novel to my ear that I was intoxicated by it. Perhaps my absolute ignorance up to that time of everything bordering on sentiment made that language seem more delicious and more extraordinary to me than it would have seemed to a more experienced girl. But I believe—and other women believed with me—that no man on earth ever felt and expressed love like Leoni. Superior to other men in evil and in good, he spoke another tongue, he had another expression, he had also another heart. I have heard an Italian woman say that a bouquet in Leoni's hand was more fragrant than in another man's, and it was so with everything. He gave lustre to the simplest things and rejuvenated the oldest. There was a prestige about him; I was neither able nor desirous to escape its influence. I began to love him with all my strength.

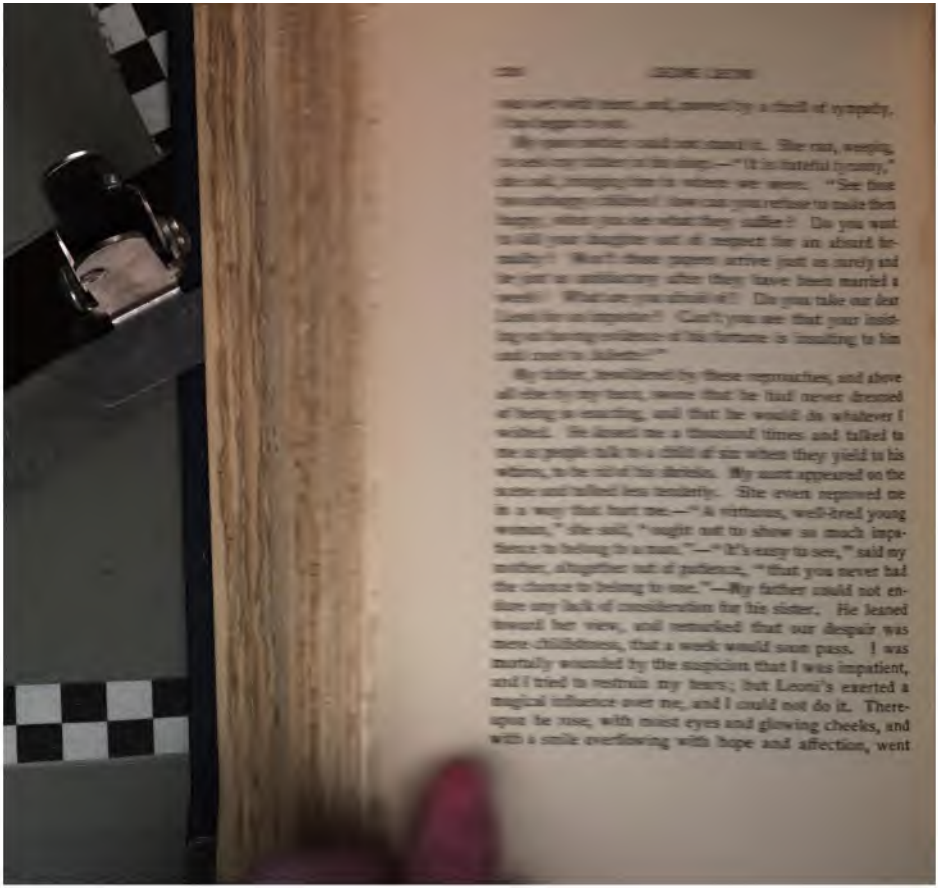
At this period I seemed to grow in my own eyes. Whether it was the work of God, of Leoni, or of love, a vigorous mind developed and took possession of my feeble body. Every day I felt a world of new thoughts come to life within me. A word from Leoni gave birth to more sentiments than all the frivolous talk I had heard all my life. He observed my progress and was elated and proud over it. He sought to hasten it and brought me books. My mother looked at the gilt covers, the vellum and the pictures. She hardly glanced at the titles of the works which were destined to play havoc with my head and my heart. They were beautiful and pure books, almost all stories of women written by women: *Valérie, Eugène de Rothelin, Mademoiselle de Clermont, Delphine.* These

touching and impassioned narratives, these glimpses of what was to me an ideal world, elevated my mind, but they devoured it. I became romantic, the most deplorable character that a woman can have.

VI

Three months had sufficed to bring about this metamorphosis. I was on the eve of marrying Leoni. Of all the documents he had promised to furnish, his certificate of birth and his patents of nobility alone had come to hand. As for the proofs of his wealth, he had written for them to another lawyer, and they had not arrived. He manifested extreme irritation and regret at this delay, which caused a further postponement of our wedding. One morning he came to our house with an air of desperation. He showed us an unstamped letter, which he had just received, he said, by a special messenger. This letter informed him that his man of business was dead, and that his successor, having found his papers in great disorder, had a difficult task before him to arrange them, that he asked a further delay of one or two weeks before he could furnish *his lordship* with the documents he required. Leoni was frantic at this mischance; he would die of impatience and disappointment, he said, before the end of that frightful fortnight. He threw himself down in a chair and burst into tears.

No, do not smile, Don Aleo, they were not pretended tears. I gave him my hand to console him; I felt that it



[illegible] and, moved by a thrill of sympathy, [illegible]

My [illegible] could not stand it. She ran, weeping, to seek my father in his shop.—"It is fateful tyranny," she said, [illegible] in where we were. "See those two [illegible] children! How can you refuse to make them happy, when you see what they suffer? Do you want to kill your daughter out of respect for an absurd formality? What! those papers arrive just as surely and be just as satisfactory after they have been married a week? What are you afraid of? Do you take our dear Leoni for an impostor? Can't you see that your insisting on having evidence of his fortune is insulting to him and cruel to Juliette?"

My father, bewildered by these reproaches, and above all else by my tears, swore that he had never dreamed of being so exacting, and that he would do whatever I wished. He kissed me a thousand times and talked to me as people talk to a child of six when they yield to his whims, to be rid of his shrieks. My aunt appeared on the scene and talked less tenderly. She even reproved me in a way that hurt me.—"A virtuous, well-bred young woman," she said, "ought not to show so much impatience to belong to a man."—"It's easy to see," said my mother, altogether out of patience, "that you never had the chance to belong to one."—My father could not endure any lack of consideration for his sister. He leaned toward her view, and remarked that our despair was mere childishness, that a week would soon pass. I was mortally wounded by the suspicion that I was impatient, and I tried to restrain my tears; but Leoni's exerted a magical influence over me, and I could not do it. Thereupon he rose, with moist eyes and glowing cheeks, and with a smile overflowing with hope and affection, went

to my aunt, took her hands in one of his, my father's in the other, and fell on his knees, beseeching them not to stand in the way of his happiness any longer. His manner, his tone, his expression had an irresistible power; moreover, it was the first time that my aunt had ever seen a man at her feet. Every trace of resistance was overcome. The banns were published, all the preliminary formalities were gone through; our marriage was appointed for the following week, regardless of the arrival of the papers.

The following day was Mardi Gras. Monsieur Delpech was to give a magnificent party, and Leoni had asked us to dress in Turkish costumes; he made a charming sketch in water-color, which our dress-makers copied almost perfectly. Velvet, embroidered satin and cashmere were not spared. But the quantity and beauty of our jewels were what assured us an indisputable triumph over all the other costumes at the ball. Almost all the contents of my father's shop were made use of; we had nets and aigrettes of diamonds, bouquets beautifully mounted in stones of all colors. My waist, and even my shoes, were embroidered with rare pearls; a rope of pearls, of extraordinary beauty, served me as a girdle and fell to my knees. We had great pipes and daggers studded with sapphires and diamonds. My whole costume was worth at least a million.

Leoni accompanied us, dressed in a superb Turkish costume. He was so handsome and so majestic in that garb that people stood on benches to see him pass. My heart beat violently, I was filled to bursting with a pride that was almost delirium. My own costume was, as you can imagine, the last thing in my mind. Leoni's beauty, his success, his superiority to all the others, the sort of worship that was paid him—and it was all mine, all at

my feet! that was enough to intoxicate an older brain than mine. It was the last day of my splendor! By what a world of misery and degradation have I paid for those empty triumphs!

My aunt, dressed as a Jewess, accompanied us, carrying fans and boxes of perfume. Leoni, who was determined to win her friendship, had designed her costume so artistically that he had almost given a touch of poetry to her serious, wrinkled face. She, too, was intoxicated, poor Agathe! Alas! what does a woman's commonsense amount to?

We had been there two or three hours. My mother was dancing and my aunt gossiping with the superannuated females who compose what is called in France the tapestry of a ball-room. Leoni was seated by my side and talking to me in an undertone with a passion of which every word kindled a spark in my blood. Suddenly his voice died on his lips; he became pale as death, as if he had seen a ghost. I followed the direction of his terrified glance and saw, a few steps away, a person the sight of whom was distasteful to myself: it was a young man named Henryet, who had made me an offer of marriage the year before. Although he was rich and of an honorable family, my mother had not deemed him worthy of me, and had dismissed him on the pretext of my extreme youth. But, at the beginning of the following year, he had renewed his offer with much persistence, and it had been currently reported in the city that he was madly in love with me. I had not deigned to take any notice of him, and my mother, who considered him too simple and too ordinary, had put an end to his assiduities rather abruptly. He had manifested more grief than anger, and had started immediately for Paris. Since then my aunt and my young friends had

reproached me somewhat for my indifference with respect to him. He was, they said, a most excellent young man, thoroughly educated, and of a noble character. These reproaches had disgusted me. His unexpected appearance in the midst of the happiness I was enjoying with Leoni was most unpleasant to me, and had the effect upon me of a new reproof. I turned my face away and pretended not to have seen him, but the strange glance he bestowed upon me did not escape me. Leoni hastily grasped my arm, and asked me to come and take an ice in the next room; he added that the heat was distressing to him and made him nervous. I believed him, and thought that Henryet's glance expressed nothing more than jealousy. We went into the gallery. There were few people there, and I walked back and forth for some time, leaning on Leoni's arm. He was agitated and preoccupied. I manifested some uneasiness thereat, and he answered that it was not worth talking about; that he simply did not feel perfectly well.

He was beginning to recover himself when I saw that Henryet had followed us. I could not help showing my annoyance.

"Upon my word that man follows us like remorse," I whispered to Leoni. "Is it really a man? I can almost believe that it is a soul in distress returned from the other world."

"What man?" said Leoni, with a start. "What's his name? where is he? what does he want of us? do you know him?"

I told him in a few words what had happened, and begged him not to seem to notice Henryet's absurd actions. But Leoni did not reply; and I felt his hand, which held mine, become cold as death. A convulsive

shoulder passed through his body, and I thought that he was going to faint; but it was all over in an instant.

"My nerves are horribly upset," he said. "I believe that I shall have to go to bed; my head is on fire, and this curtain weighs a hundred pounds."

"O mon Dieu!" said I, "if you go now, this night will seem interminable to me, and the party stupid beyond endurance. Go into some more retired room and try taking off your cuirass for a few moments; we will ask for a few drops of ether to quiet your nerves."

"Yes, you are right, my dear, good Juliette, my angel. There's a boudoir at the end of the gallery, where we probably shall be alone; a moment of rest will cure me."

As he spoke, he led me hastily in the direction of the boudoir; he seemed to fly rather than walk. I heard steps coming after us. I turned and saw Henryet coming nearer and nearer and looking as if he were pursuing us. I thought that he had gone mad. The terror which Leoni could not hide put the finishing touch to the confusion of my ideas. A superstitious fear took possession of me; my blood congealed as in a nightmare; and it was impossible for me to take another step. At that moment Henryet overtook us and laid a hand, which seemed to me metallic, on Leoni's shoulder. Leoni stood still, as if struck by lightning, and nodded his head affirmatively, as if he had divined a question or an injunction in that terrifying silence. Thereupon Henryet walked away, and I felt that I could move my feet once more. I had the strength to follow Leoni into the boudoir, where I fell on an ottoman, as pale and terror-stricken as he.

VII

He remained some time thus; then, suddenly collecting his strength, he threw himself at my feet.

"Juliette," he said, "I am lost unless you love me to frenzy."

"O heaven! what does that mean?" I cried wildly, throwing my arms around his neck.

"And you do not love me that way!" he continued, in an agony of despair. "I am lost, am I not?"

"I love you with all the strength of my heart!" I cried, weeping. "What must I do to save you?"

"Ah! you would never consent!" he replied, with a discouraged air. "I am the most miserable of men; you are the only woman I have ever loved, Juliette, and when I am on the point of possessing you, my heart, my life, I lose you forever! I have no choice but to die."

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" I cried; "can't you speak? can't you tell me what you expect of me?"

"No, I cannot speak," he replied; "a ghastly secret, a frightful mystery overhangs my whole life, and I can never disclose it to you. To love me, to go with me, to comfort me, you would need to be more than a woman, more than angel, perhaps!"

"To love you! to go with you!" I repeated. "Shall I not be your wife in a few days? You have but a word to say; however great my sorrow and that of my parents, I will follow you to the end of the world, if it is your will."

"Is that true, O my Juliette?" he cried in a transport

of joy; "you will go with me? you will leave everything for me? Very well; if you love me as much as that, I am saved! Let us go, let us go at once!"

"What! can you think of such a thing, Leoni? Are we married?" said I.

"We cannot marry," he replied shortly, in a firm voice.

I was stricken dumb.

"And if you will not love me, if you will not fly with me," he continued, "I have but one course to take; that is, to kill myself."

He said this in such a determined tone that I shuddered from head to foot.

"In heaven's name what is happening to us?" I said; "is this a dream? Who can prevent our marrying, when everything is decided, when you have my father's word?"

"A word from the man who is in love with you, and who is determined to prevent you from being mine."

"I hate him and despise him!" I cried. "Where is he? I propose to make him feel the shame of such cowardly persecution and such a detestable vengeance. But how can he injure you, Leoni? are you not so far above his attacks that with a word you can pulverize him? Are not your virtue and your strength as pure and unassailable as gold? O heaven! I understand; you are ruined! the papers you have been expecting bring only bad news. Henryet knows it and threatens to tell my parents. His conduct is infamous; but have no fear, my parents are kind, they adore me; I will throw myself at their feet, I will threaten to go into a convent; you can appeal to them again as you did yesterday and you will persuade them, you may be sure. Am I not rich enough for two? My father will not choose to condemn me to die of grief;

my mother will intercede for me. We three together shall be stronger than my aunt to argue with him. Come, don't be distressed, Leoni, this cannot part us, it is impossible. If my parents should prove to be as sordid as that, then I would fly with you."

"Let us fly then at once," said Leoni with an air of profound gloom; "for they will be inflexible. There is something in addition to my ruin, something infernal, which I cannot tell you. Are you kind? Are you the woman I have dreamed of and thought I had found in you? Are you capable of heroism? Do you understand great things, boundless devotion? Tell me, Juliette, tell me, are you simply an amiable, pretty woman from whom I shall part with regret, or are you an angel whom God has sent to me to save me from despair? Do you feel that there is something noble in sacrificing yourself for one you love? Does not your heart swell at the thought of holding in your hands a man's life and destiny and in consecrating your whole being to him? Ah! if only we could change our rôles! if I were in your place! With what joy, with what bliss I would sacrifice to you all my affections, all my duties!"

"Enough, Leoni!" I replied, "you drive me wild with your words. Mercy, mercy for my poor mother, for my poor father, for my honor! You wish to ruin me——"

"Ah! you think of all those people!" he cried, "and not of me! You weigh the sorrow of your parents, and you do not deign to put mine in the balance! You do not love me!"

I hid my face in my hands, I appealed to God, I listened to Leoni's sobs; I thought that I was going mad.

"Very well! you will have it so," I said, "and you have the power; speak, tell me what you wish, and I

must obey you; have you not my mind and my will at your disposal?"

"We have very few minutes to lose," replied Leoni. "We must be away from here in an hour, or your flight will have become impossible. There is a vulture's eye hovering over us; but if you consent, we will find a way to outwit him. Do you consent? do you consent?"

He pressed me frantically in his arms. Cries of agony escaped from his breast. I answered yes without knowing what I was saying.

"Well, then, go back at once to the ball-room," he said, "and show no excitement. If anybody questions you, say that you have been a little indisposed; but don't let them take you home. Dance if you must. Above all things, if Henryet speaks to you, don't irritate him; remember that for another hour my fate is in his hands. An hour hence I will come back in a domino. I will have this bit of ribbon in my hood. You will recognize it, won't you? You will go with me, and above all else, you will be calm, impassive. You must think of all this; do you feel that you are strong enough?"

I rose and pressed my hands against my throbbing heart. My throat was on fire, my cheeks were burning with fever. I was like a drunken man.

"Come, come," he said to me; with that he pushed me into the ball-room and disappeared. My mother was looking for me. I could detect her anxiety in the distance, and to avoid her questions I hurriedly accepted an invitation to dance.

I danced, and I have no idea how I kept from falling when the dance was at an end, I had made such a mighty effort to get through it. When I returned to my place my mother was already on the floor, waltzing. She had seen me dancing, so her mind was at rest, and she began

to enjoy herself once more. My aunt, instead of questioning me about my absence, scolded me. I preferred that, for I was not called upon to answer and to lie. One of my friends asked me with a terrified air what the matter was with me and why I had such a distressed expression on my face. I answered that I had just had a violent fit of coughing.—"You must rest," she said, "and not dance any more."

But I had decided to avoid my mother's glance; I was afraid of her anxiety, her affection and my remorse. I spied her handkerchief, which she had left on the bench; I picked it up, put it to my face, and, covering my mouth with it, devoured it with convulsive kisses. My friend thought that I was coughing again, for I pretended to cough. I did not know how to pass that fatal hour, barely half of which had dragged away. My aunt noticed that I was very hoarse and said that she was going to urge my mother to go home. I was terrified by that threat and instantly accepted another invitation. When I was in the midst of the dancers, I noticed that I had accepted an invitation to waltz. Like almost all girls, I never waltzed; but, when I recognized in the man who already had his arm about me the sinister face of Henryet, terror prevented my refusing. He led me away and the rapid movement took away the last remnant of my reasoning power. I asked myself if all that was taking place about me were not a vision; if I were not lying in bed with the fever, rather than whirling about in a waltz, like a mad woman, with a man whom I held in horror. And then I remembered that Leoni would soon come for me. I looked at my mother, who seemed to fly through the circle of dancers, so light of foot and heart was she. I said to myself that it was impossible, that I could not leave my mother thus. I felt that Henryet was holding

me very tight in his arms and that his eyes were devouring my face, which was turned toward his. I came very near shrieking and flying from him. But I remembered Leoni's words: "My fate is in his hands for another hour." So I resigned myself. We stopped for a moment. He spoke to me. I did not hear what he said, but answered with a wild sort of smile. At that moment I felt something brush against my bare arms and shoulders. I had no need to turn for I recognized the almost imperceptible breathing of Leoni. I asked to be taken back to my place. Another moment and Leoni, in a black domino, offered me his hand. I went with him. We glided through the crowd, we escaped, by some miracle, the jealous surveillance of Henryet and of my mother's eyes, for she was looking for me again. The very audacity with which I left the ball-room in the presence of five hundred witnesses, to fly with Leoni, prevented my flight from being noticed. We passed through the throng in the dressing-rooms. Some people who were getting their cloaks recognized us and were astonished to see me going down the stairs without my mother, but they also were going away and so would not report what they had seen in the ball-room.

When we reached the court-yard, Leoni, dragging me behind him, rushed to a side gate not used by carriages. We ran a short distance along a dark street; the door of a post-chaise opened, Leoni lifted me in, wrapped me in a huge fur cloak, pulled a travelling cap over my head, and in the twinkling of an eye Monsieur Delpech's brilliantly lighted house, the street and the city disappeared behind us.

We travelled twenty-four hours without once leaving the carriage. At each relay-house, Leoni raised the window a little, put his arm outside, tossed the postilions four

times their pay, hurriedly withdrew his arm and closed the window. I scarcely thought of complaining of fatigue or hunger; my teeth were clenched, my nerves tense; I could neither shed a tear nor say a word. Leoni seemed more disturbed by the fear of being pursued than by my suffering and grief.

We halted near a château a short distance from the road. We rang at a garden gate. A servant opened the gate after we had waited a long while. It was two o'clock in the morning. When he finally appeared, grumbling, he put his lantern to Leoni's face; he had no sooner recognized him than he lost himself in apologies and led us to the house. It seemed deserted and ill-kept. Nevertheless I was shown to a fairly comfortable chamber. In a moment a fire was lighted, the bed prepared, and a woman came to undress me. I had fallen into a sort of idiocy. The heat of the fire revivified me somewhat, and I discovered that I was in a night-dress, with my hair unbound, alone with Leoni; but he paid no attention to me; he was busy packing in a box the magnificent costume, the pearls and diamonds in which we were both arrayed a moment before. The jewels that Leoni wore belonged for the most part to my father. My mother, determined that his costume should not be less gorgeous than ours, had taken them from the shop and lent them to him without saying anything about it. When I saw all that wealth packed into a box, I was mortally ashamed of the species of theft we had committed, and I thanked Leoni for thinking about returning them to my father. I don't know what answer he made; he told me that I had four hours to sleep and begged me to make the best of them, without anxiety or grief. He kissed my bare feet and left me. I had not the courage to go to bed; I slept in an arm-chair by the fire. At six

[illegible] thought [illegible] and [illegible] me, and [illegible] of which [illegible] houses, [illegible] were thrown [illegible] serenity of [illegible] former affection. [illegible] passion. I was in [illegible] upon it [illegible] he was cheer- [illegible] remorse to smile [illegible] the weariness [illegible] weeping; I [illegible] him and to [illegible] of [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] where we remained only long enough [illegible] into the interior of Switzerland [illegible] fear of pursuit and [illegible] departure, [illegible]'s only thought [illegible] to some peaceful [illegible] and poetry in a never- [illegible] dream was realized.

[illegible] the valleys near Lago Maggiore one

of the most picturesque of chalets in a fascinating situation. At a very small expense we had it arranged conveniently inside, and we hired it at the beginning of April. We passed there six months of intoxicating bliss, for which I shall thank God all my life, although He has made me pay very dear for them. We were absolutely alone and cut off from all relations with the world. We were served by a young couple, good-humored, sturdy country people, who added to our contentment by the spectacle of that which they enjoyed. The woman did the housework and the cooking, the husband drove to pasture a cow and two goats, which composed all our live stock, milked and made the cheese. We rose early, and, when the weather was fine, breakfasted a short distance from the house, in a pretty orchard, where the trees, abandoned to the hand of nature, put forth dense branches in every direction, less rich in fruit than in flowers and foliage. Then we went out to drive in the valley or climbed some mountain. We gradually adopted the habit of taking long excursions, and every day discovered some new spot. Mountainous countries have the peculiar charm that one can explore them for a long time before one becomes acquainted with all their beauties and all their secrets. When we went on our longest excursions, Joanne, our light-hearted major-domo, attended us with a basket of provisions, and nothing could be more delightful than our lunches on the grass. Leoni was easily satisfied except as to what he called the refectory. At last, when we had found a little verdure-clad shelf half-way down the slope of some deep gorge, sheltered from wind and sun, with a lovely view, and a brook close at hand sweetened by aromatic plants, he would himself arrange the repast on a white napkin spread on the ground. He would send Joanne to pick strawberries

and plunge the wine into the cool water of the stream. He would light a spirit lamp and cook fresh eggs. By the same process I used to make excellent coffee after the cold meat and fruit. In this way we had something of the enjoyments of civilization amid the romantic beauties of the desert.

When the weather was bad, as was often the case in the early spring, we lighted a huge fire to keep the dampness from our little dwelling of fir; we surrounded ourselves with screens which Leoni sawed out, put together and painted with his own hand. We drank tea; and while he smoked a long Turkish pipe I read to him. We called those our Flemish days; while they were less exciting than the others, they were perhaps even pleasanter. Leoni had an admirable talent for apportioning the time so as to make life easy and agreeable. In the morning he would exert his mind to lay out a scheme for the day and arrange our occupations for the different hours; and when it was done he would come and submit it to me. I always found it admirable, and we always adhered strictly to it. In this way, ennui, which always pursues recluses and even lovers in their tête-à-têtes, never came near us. Leoni knew all that must be avoided and all that must be looked after to maintain mental tranquillity and bodily well-being. He would give me directions in his adroitly affectionate way; and, being as submissive to him as a slave to his master, I never opposed a single one of his wishes. He said, for instance, that the exchange of thoughts between two people who love each other is the sweetest thing imaginable, but that it may become the greatest curse if it is abused. So he regulated the hours of our interviews and the places where they were to be held. We worked all day; I looked after the housekeeping; I prepared dainty

dishes for him or folded his linen with my own hands. He was extremely sensible of such petty refinements of luxury, and found them doubly precious in our little hermitage. He, on his side, provided for all our needs and remedied all the inconveniences of our isolation. He had a little knowledge of all sorts of trades; he did cabinet work, he put on locks, he made partitions with wooden frames and painted paper panels, he prevented chimneys from smoking, he grafted fruit trees, he diverted the course of a stream, so that we had a supply of cool water near the house. He was always busy about something useful, and he always did it well. When these more important duties were performed, he painted in water-colors, composed lovely landscapes from the sketches we had made in our albums during our walks. Sometimes he wandered about the valley alone, making verses, and hurried home to repeat them to me. He often found me in the stable with my apron full of aromatic herbs of which the goats were very fond. My two lovely pets ate from my lap. One was pure white, without a speck; her name was *Snow;* she had a gentle, melancholy air. The other was yellow like a chamois, with black beard and legs. She was very young, with a wild, saucy face; we called her *Doe.* The cow's name was *Daisy.* She was red, with black stripes running transversely, like a tiger. She would put her head on my shoulder; and when Leoni found me so, he called me his Virgin at the Manger. He would toss me his album and dictate his verses, which were almost always addressed to me. They were hymns of love and happiness which seemed sublime to me, and which must have been sublime. I would weep silently as I wrote them down; and when I had finished, "Well," Leoni would say, "do you think they are pretty bad?" At that I

would raise my tear-stained face to his; he would laugh and kiss me with the keenest delight.

Then he would sit down on the sweet-smelling hay and read me poems in other languages, which he translated with incredible rapidity and accuracy. Meanwhile I was spinning in the half-light of the stable. One must be familiar with the exquisite cleanliness of Swiss stables to understand our choosing ours for our salon. It was traversed by a swift mountain stream which washed it clean every moment, and which rejoiced our ears with its gentle plashing. Tame pigeons drank at our feet, and under the little arch through which the stream entered, saucy sparrows hopped in to bathe and steal a few wisps of hay. It was the coolest spot in warm days, when all the windows were open, and the warmest on cold days, when the smallest cracks were stuffed with straw and furze. Leoni, when tired of reading, would often fall asleep on the freshly-cut grass, and I would leave my work to gaze at that beautiful face, which the serenity of sleep made even nobler than before.

During these busy days we talked little, although almost always together; we would exchange an occasional loving word or caress and encourage each other in our work. But when the evening came, Leoni became indolent in body and mentally active. Those were the hours when he was most lovable, and he reserved them for the outpouring of our affection. Fatigued, but not unpleasantly, by his day's work, he would lie on the moss at my feet, in a lonely spot near the house, on the slope of the mountain. From there we would behold the gorgeous sunset, the melancholy fading away of the daylight, the grave and solemn coming of the night. We knew the moment when all the stars would rise, and over which peak each of them would begin to shine. Leoni

was thoroughly familiar with astronomy, but Joanne, too, knew that science of the shepherds after his manner, and he gave the stars other names, often more poetic and more expressive than ours. When Leoni had amused himself sufficiently with his rustic pedantry, he would send him away to play the *Ranz des Vaches* on his reed-pipe at the foot of the mountain. The shrill notes sounded indescribably sweet in the distance. Leoni would fall into a reverie which resembled a trance; and then, when it was quite dark, when the silence of the valley was no longer broken by aught save the plaintive cry of some cliff-dwelling bird, when the fireflies lighted their lamps in the grass about us and a soft breeze sighed through the firs over our heads, Leoni would seem to wake suddenly from a dream, as if to another life. His heart would take fire, his passionate eloquence would overflow my heart. He would talk to the skies, the wind, the echoes, to all nature with enthusiastic fervor; he would take me in his arms and overwhelm me with delirious caresses; then he would weep with love on my bosom, and, growing calmer, would talk to me in the sweetest, most intoxicating words.

Oh! how could I have failed to love that unequalled man, in his good and in his evil days? How lovable he was then! how beautiful! how becoming the sunburn was to his manly face, and with what profound respect it avoided the broad white forehead over the jet-black eyebrows! How well he knew how to love and to tell his love! What a genius he had for arranging life and making it beautiful! How could I have failed to have blind confidence in him? How could I have failed to accustom myself to absolute submission to him? All that he did, all that he said, was good and wise and noble. He was generous, sensitive, refined, heroic; he took

pleasure in relieving the destitution or the infirmities of the poor who knocked at our door. One day he jumped into a stream, at the risk of his life, to save a young shepherd; one night he wandered through the snow-drifts, surrounded by the most awful dangers, to assist some travellers who had lost their way and whose cries of distress we had heard. Oh! how, how could I have distrusted Leoni? how could I have conceived any dread of the future? Do not tell me again that I am credulous and weak; the most strong-minded of women would have been subjugated forever by those six months of love. As for myself, I was absolutely enslaved; and my cruel remorse for having abandoned my parents, the thought of their grief, grew fainter day by day, and, finally, vanished almost entirely. Oh! how great was that man's power!

Juliette paused and fell into a melancholy reverie. A clock in the distance struck twelve. I suggested that she should rest. "No," said she, "if you are not tired of listening to me, I prefer to go on. I feel that I have undertaken a task that will be very painful for my poor heart, and that when I have finished I shall neither feel nor remember anything for several days. I prefer to make the most of the strength I have to-day."

"Yes, you are right, Juliette," I said. "Tear the steel from your breast, and you will be better afterward. But tell me, my poor child, how it was that Henryet's strange conduct at the ball and Leoni's craven submission at a glance from him did not leave a suspicion, a fear in your mind?"

"What could I fear?" replied Juliette. "I knew so little of the affairs of life and the baseness of society that I utterly failed to understand that mystery. Leoni had told me that there was a terible secret. I imagined

a thousand romantic catastrophes. It was the fashion then in books to introduce characters burdened by the most extraordinary and improbable maledictions. Plays and novels alike teemed with sons of headsmen, heroic spies, virtuous murderers and felons. One day I read *Frederick Styndall,* another day, Cooper's *Spy* fell into my hands. Remember that I was a mere child, and that my mind was far behind my heart in my passion. I fancied that society, being unjust and stupid, had placed Leoni under its ban for some sublime imprudence, some involuntary offence, or as the result of some savage prejudice. I will even admit that my poor girlish brain found an additional attraction in that impenetrable mystery, and that my woman's heart took fire at the opportunity of adventuring its entire destiny to repair a noble and poetic misfortune."

"Leoni probably detected that romantic tendency and played upon it?" I said.

"Yes," she replied, "he did. But if he took so much trouble to deceive me, it was because he loved me, because he was determined to have my love at any price."

We were silent for a moment; then Juliette resumed her narrative.

IX

The winter came at last; we had made our plans to endure all its rigors rather than abandon our dear retreat. Leoni told me that he had never been so happy, that I was the only woman he had ever loved, that he was ready to renounce the world in order to live and die in

my arms. His taste for dissipation, his passion for gambling—all had vanished, forgotten forever. Oh! how grateful I was to see that man, who shone so in society and was so flattered and courted, renounce without regret all the intoxicating joys of a life of excitement and festivities, to shut himself up with me in a cottage! And be sure, Don Aleo, that Leoni was not deceiving me at that time. While it is true that he had very strong reasons for keeping out of sight, it is none the less certain that he was happy in his retreat, and that he loved me there. Could he have feigned that perfect serenity during six whole months, unchanged for a single day? And why should he not have loved me? I was young and fair, I had left everything for him and I adored him. Understand, I am no longer under any delusion as to his character; I know everything and I will tell you the whole truth. His character is very ugly and very beautiful; very vile and very grand; when one has not the strength to hate the man, one must needs love him and become his victim.

But the winter began so fiercely that our residence in the valley became extremely dangerous. In a few days the snow reached the level of our chalet; it threatened to bury it and to cause our deaths by starvation. Leoni insisted on remaining; he wanted to lay in a stock of provisions and defy the enemy; but Joanne assured him that we should inevitably be lost if we did not beat a retreat at once; that such a winter had not been seen for ten years, and that when the thaw came the chalet would be swept away like a feather by the avalanches, unless Saint Bernard and Our Lady of the Snow-drifts should save it by a miracle.

"If I were alone," said Leoni, "I would wait for a miracle and laugh at the snow-drifts; but I have no

courage when you share my dangers. We will go away to-morrow."

"We must do it," I said; "but where shall we go? I shall be recognized and betrayed very soon; I shall be compelled by force to return to my parents."

"There are a thousand ways of eluding men and laws," replied Leoni with a smile; "we can surely find one; don't be alarmed; the whole world is at our disposal."

"And where shall we begin?" I asked, forcing myself to smile too.

"I don't know yet," he replied, "but what does it matter? we shall be together; where can we be unhappy?"

"Alas!" said I, "shall we ever be so happy as we have been here?"

"Do you want to stay here?"

"No," I replied, "we should be happy no longer; in presence of danger, we should always be alarmed for each other."

We made preparations for our departure. Joanne passed the day clearing the path by which we were to go. During the night I had a strange experience, upon which I have feared, many times since then, to meditate.

In the midst of a sound sleep I suddenly felt very cold and woke up. I felt for Leoni at my side, but he was not there; his place was cold, and the bedroom door was ajar, admitting a current of ice-cold air. I waited a few moments, but, as Leoni did not return, I began to be alarmed, so I rose and hastily dressed myself. Even then I waited before making up my mind to go out, reluctant to allow myself to be governed by any mere childish anxiety. But he did not appear; an invincible terror seized upon me, and I went out, scantily clad, with the thermometer fifteen degrees below freezing. I was

afraid that Leoni might have gone to assist some poor creatures who were lost in the snow, as had happened a few nights before, and I was determined to follow and find him. I called Joanne and his wife; they were sleeping so soundly that they did not hear me. Thereupon, almost frantic with dread, I went to the edge of the little palisaded platform which surrounded the chalet and saw a faint light twinkling on the snow some distance away. I fancied that I recognized the lantern that Leoni carried on his relief expeditions. I ran toward it as rapidly as the snow would allow me, sinking in up to my knees. I tried to call him, but the cold made my teeth chatter, and the wind, which blew in my face, intercepted my voice. At last I came near to the light and could see Leoni distinctly; he was standing on the spot where I had first seen him, holding a spade. I approached still nearer, the snow deadening the sound of my footsteps, and finally stood almost beside him, unseen by him. The light was enclosed in its metal cylinder and shone through a slit on the opposite side from me, directly upon him.

I saw then that he had shovelled away the snow and dug into the earth; he was up to his knees in a hole he had made.

This strange occupation, at such an hour and in such severe weather, gave me an absurd fright. Leoni seemed to be in extraordinary haste. From time to time he glanced uneasily about; I crouched behind a rock for I was terrified by the expression of his face. It seemed to me that he would kill me if he should find me there. All the fanciful, foolish stories I had read, all the strange conjectures I had made concerning his secret, recurred to my mind; I believed that he had come there to dig up a corpse, and I almost fainted. I was somewhat reassured when I saw him, after digging a little longer, take a box

from the hole. He scrutinized it closely, looked to see if the lock had been forced, then placed it on the edge of the hole and began to throw back the earth and snow, taking little pains to conceal the traces of his operation.

When I saw that he was ready to return to the house with his box, I was terribly afraid that he would discover my imprudent curiosity, and I fled as swiftly as I could. I made haste to throw my wet clothes into a corner and go back to bed, resolved to pretend to be fast asleep when he returned; but I had plenty of time to recover from my emotion, for it was more than half an hour before he reappeared.

I lost myself in conjectures concerning that mysterious box, which must have been buried on the mountain since our arrival, and was destined to accompany us, either as a talisman of safety or as an instrument of death. It seemed to me unlikely that it contained money; for it was of considerable size and yet Leoni had lifted it with one hand and without apparent effort. Perhaps it contained papers upon which his very existence depended. What impressed me most strongly was the idea that I had seen the box before; but it was impossible for me to remember when or where. This time its shape and color were engraved on my memory as if by a sort of fatal necessity. I had it before my eyes all night, and in my dreams I saw a multitude of strange objects come out of it: sometimes cards cut into curious shapes, sometimes bloody weapons; sometimes flowers, feathers and jewels; and sometimes bones, snakes, bits of gold, iron chains and anklets.

I was very careful not to question Leoni or to let him suspect my discovery. He had often said to me that on the day that I discovered his secret all would be at an end between us; and although he thanked me on his

knew he believing blindly in him, he often gave me to understand that the slightest curiosity on my part would be distasteful to him. We started the next morning on mules, and travelled by post from the nearest town all the way to Venice.

There we alighted at one of those mysterious houses which Leoni seemed to have at his disposal in all countries. This one was dark, dilapidated and hidden away, as it were, in a deserted quarter of the city. He told me that it belonged to a friend of his who was absent; he begged me to try to put up with it for a day or two, adding that there were important reasons why he could not show himself in the city at once, but that, in twenty-four hours at the latest, I should be provided with suitable lodgings and should have no reason to complain of life in his native place.

We had just breakfasted in a cold, damp room, when a shabbily dressed man, with a disagreeable face and a sickly complexion, made his appearance, observing that Leoni had sent for him.

"Yes, yes, my dear Thaddeus," Leoni replied, hastily leaving the table; "I am glad to see you; let us go into another room and not bore madame with business matters."

An hour later Leoni came and kissed me; he seemed excited, but satisfied, as if he had won a victory.

"I must leave you for a few hours," he said; "I am going to have your new home made ready; we shall sleep there to-morrow night."

X

He was away all day. The next day he went out early. He seemed very busy; but he was in a more cheerful mood than I had yet seen him. That gave me courage to endure the tedium of another twelve hours and dispelled the melancholy impression that that cold and silent house produced upon me. In the afternoon I tried to distract my thoughts by going over it; it was very old; some remnants of antiquated furniture, tattered hangings, and several pictures half consumed by rats attracted my attention; but an object even more interesting to me turned my thoughts in another direction.

As I entered the room where Leoni had slept, I saw the famous box on the floor; it was open and entirely empty. An enormous weight was lifted from my mind. The unknown dragon confined in that box had taken flight! the terrible destiny which it had seemed to me to forebode no longer weighed upon us!—"Well, well," I said to myself with a smile, "Pandora's box is empty; hope has remained behind for me."

As I was about to leave the room, I placed my foot on a small bit of cotton wool which had been left lying on the floor with some crumpled tissue paper. I felt something hard and stooped mechanically to pick it up. My fingers felt the same hard substance through the cotton, and on pulling it apart I found a pin made of several large diamonds, which I at once recognized as belonging to my father, and which I had worn on the evening of the last ball, to fasten a scarf on my shoulder. This in-

silent made such an impression on me that I thought no more of the box or of Leoni's secret. I was conscious of nothing but a vague feeling of uneasiness concerning the jewels I had carried with me in my flight, and to which I had not since given even a thought, supposing that Leoni had sent them back at once. The possibility that that had not been done was horrible to me; and as soon as Leoni returned I asked him ingenuously:

"My dear, you didn't forget to send back my father's diamonds after we left Brussels, did you?"

Leoni looked at me with a strange expression. He seemed to be trying to read in the lowest depths of my soul.

"Why don't you answer?" I said; "what is there so surprising in my question?"

"What the devil does it mean?" he replied calmly.

"It means that I went into your room to-day, and found this on your floor. Thereupon I feared that, in the excitement of our flight and the confusion of our travels, you might have forgotten to send back the other jewels. For my own part, I hardly reminded you of it; my brain was in such a whirl."

As I concluded, I handed him the pin. I spoke so naturally and was so far from dreaming of suspecting him, that he saw it at once; and, taking the pin with the utmost calmness, he said:

"*Parbleu!* I don't know what this means. Where did you find it? Are you sure that it belonged to your father and was not left behind here by the people who occupied the house before us?"

"Oh! yes," said I, "here is an almost imperceptible mark near the fastening; it's my father's private mark. With a magnifying-glass you can see his cipher."

"Very good," he replied; "then the pin must have

been left in one of our trunks, and I suppose I dropped it this morning when shaking some of my clothes. Luckily it's the only piece of jewelry we brought away by accident; all the rest was placed in charge of a reliable man and addressed to Delpech, who must have turned it over to your family. I don't believe that it is worth while to return this; it would excite your mother's grief anew for very little money."

"It is worth at least ten thousand francs," I said.

"Very well, keep it until you have an opportunity to send it back. By the way, are you ready? are the trunks locked? There is a gondola at the door and your house is waiting impatiently for you; supper is already served."

Half an hour later we stopped at the door of a magnificent palace. The stairways were covered with amaranth-colored carpets; the white marble rails with flowering orange-trees, in midwinter, and with light statues which seemed to lean over to salute us. The concierge and four servants came forward to assist us to disembark. Leoni took a candlestick from one of them and raised it so that I could read on the cornice of the peristyle, in silver letters on an azure ground: *Palazzo Leoni.*

"O my love," I cried, "you did not deceive us? You are rich and of noble birth and I am in your house!"

I went all over the palace with childlike delight. It was one of the finest in all Venice. The furniture and the hangings, fairly glistening with newness, had been copied from antique models, so that the paintings on the ceilings and the old-fashioned architecture harmonized perfectly with the new accessories. The luxury that we bourgeois and people of the North affect is so paltry, so vulgar, so slovenly, that I had never dreamed of such elegance. I walked through the vast galleries as through

an enchanted palace; all the objects about me were of strange shapes, of unfamiliar aspect; I wondered if I were dreaming, or if I were really the mistress and queen of all those marvellous things. Moreover, that feudal magnificence was a fresh source of enchantment to me. I had never realized the pleasure or the advantage of being noble. In France people no longer know what it is, in Belgium they have never known. Here in Italy the few remaining nobles are still proud and fond of display; the palaces are not demolished, but are allowed to crumble away. Between those walls laden with trophies and escutcheons, beneath those ceilings on which the armorial bearings of the family were painted, face to face with Leoni's ancestors painted by Titian and Veronese, some grave and stern in their long cloaks, others elegant and gracious in their black satin doublets, I understood that pride of rank which may be so attractive and so becoming when it does not adorn a fool. All this illustrious environment was so suited to Leoni that it would be impossible for me, even to-day, to think of him as a plebeian. He was the fitting descendant of those men with black beards and alabaster hands, of the type that Van Dyck has immortalized. He had their eagle-like profile, their delicate and refined features, their tall stature, their eyes, at once mocking and kindly. If those portraits could have walked they would have walked as he did; if they had spoken, they would have had his voice.

"Can it be," I said, throwing my arms about him, "that it was you, my lord, Signor Leone Leoni, who were in that chalet among the goats and hens the other day, with a pickaxe over your shoulder and a blouse on your back? Was it you that lived that life for six months, with a nameless, witless girl, who has no other merit

than her love for you? And you mean to keep me with you, you will love me always, and tell me so every morning, as at the chalet? Oh, it is a too exalted and too happy lot for me; I had not aspired so high, and it terrifies me at the same time that it intoxicates me."

"Do not be frightened," he said, with a smile, "be my companion and my queen forever. Now, come to supper; I have two guests to present to you. Arrange your hair and make yourself pretty; and when I call you my wife, don't open your eyes as if you were surprised."

We found an exquisite supper served on a table sparkling with porcelain, glass and plate. The two guests were presented to me with due solemnity; they were Venetians both, with attractive faces and refined manners, and, although very inferior to Leoni, they resembled him somewhat in their pronunciation and in the quality of their minds. I asked him in an undertone if they were kinsmen of his.

"Yes," he replied aloud, with a laugh, "they are my cousins."

"Of course," added one of them, who was addressed as the marquis, "we are all cousins."

The next day, instead of two guests, there were four or five different ones at each meal. In less than a week our house was inundated with intimate friends. These assiduous guests consumed many sweet hours that I might have passed alone with Leoni, but had to share with them all. But Leoni, after his long exile, seemed overjoyed to see his friends once more and to lead a gayer life. I could form no wish opposed to his, and I was happy to see him enjoying himself. To be sure, the society of those men was delightful. They were all young and refined, jovial or intelligent, amiable or entertaining. They had excellent manners, and most of them were men

of talent. Every morning we had music; in the afternoon we went on the water; after dinner we went to the theatre; and, on returning home, had supper and cards. I did not enjoy looking on at this last amusement, in which enormous sums changed hands every night. Leoni had given me permission to retire after supper, and I never failed. Little by little the number of our acquaintance increased, so that I was bored and fatigued by them; but I said nothing about it. Leoni still seemed enchanted by this dissipated life. All the dandies of all nations who were then in Venice met by appointment at our house to drink and gamble and sing. The best singers from the theatres came often to mingle their voices with our instruments and with Leoni's voice, which was neither less beautiful nor less skilfully managed than theirs. Despite the fascination of this society, I felt more and more the longing for repose. To be sure, we still had some pleasant hours tête-à-tête from time to time. The dandies did not come every day, but the regular habitués consisted of a dozen or more men who formed the nucleus of our dinner-parties. Leoni was so fond of them that I could not help feeling some affection for them. They were the ones who enlivened the whole table by their superiority in every respect to the others. Those men were really remarkable, and seemed in some sense reflections of Leoni. They had that sort of family resemblance, that conformity of ideas and language which had impressed me the first day. There was an indefinable air of subtlety and distinction, which was lacking even in the most distinguished of the others. Their glances were more penetrating, their replies more prompt, their self-possession more lordly, their reckless extravagance in better taste. Each one of them exerted a sort of moral authority over a portion of the new-comers. They acted

as their models and guides, at first in small matters, afterward in greater ones. Leoni was the soul of the whole body, the superior chief who was the mentor of that brilliant masculine coterie, in style, tone, dissipation and extravagance.

This species of empire pleased him, and I was not surprised at it. I had seen him reign even more openly at Brussels, and I had shared his pride and his glory; but our happy life at the chalet had taught me the secret of purer, more private joys. I regretted that life, and could not refrain from saying so.

"And so do I," said he. "I regret those months of pure delight, superior to all the empty vanities of society; but God did not choose to change the succession of the seasons for us. There is no eternal happiness any more than there is perpetual spring. It is a law of nature which we cannot escape. Be sure that everything is ordered for the best in this wicked world. The strength of a man's heart is no greater than the duration of the blessings of life. Let us submit; let us bend our necks. The flowers droop, wither and are born again every year. The human heart can renew itself like a flower, when it knows its own strength and does not bloom to the bursting point. Six months of unalloyed felicity was a tremendous allowance, my dear; we should have died of too much happiness if that had continued, or else we should have abused it. Destiny bids us come down from our ethereal peaks and breathe a less pure atmosphere in cities. Let us bow to the necessity and believe that it is well for us. When the fine weather returns again, we will return to our mountains. We shall be the more eager to find there all the pleasures of which we are deprived here; we shall better appreciate the value of our peaceful privacy; and that season of love and delight,

fumes and melodies, we might well be and were certain to be all love, all poesy, all enthusiasm: but remember that, even while we were there, I was sparing of that enthusiasm, which is so easy to lose, so impossible to find again when it is lost; remember our rainy days, when I was more or less harsh with you in forcing you to keep your mind occupied, in order to save you from reflection and the melancholy which is its inevitable consequence. Be sure that too frequent examination of oneself and others is the most dangerous of occupations. We must shake off the selfish craving which impels us to be forever searching our hearts and the hearts of those who love us, like a foolish husbandman who exhausts the soil by dint of calling on it to produce beyond its capacity. We must know how to be unemotional and frivolous at times; such periods of distraction are dangerous only to weak and indolent hearts. An ardent heart ought to seek them in order not to consume itself; it is always rich enough. A word, a glance, is sufficient to send a thrill through it in the midst of the eddying whirl which carries it away, and to bring it back more ardent and more loving to the consciousness of its passion. Here, you see, we must have excitement and variety; these great palaces are beautiful, but they are melancholy. The sea moss clings to their feet, and the limpid water in which they are reflected is often laden with vapors which fall in tears. This magnificence is severe, and these marks of nobility which please you are simply a long succession of epitaphs and tombs which we must decorate with flowers. We must fill with living beings this echoing mansion, where your footsteps would frighten you if you were alone; we must throw money from the window to this populace which has no other bed than the ice-covered parapets of the bridges, so that the spectacle of its misery may not

make us sad amid our well-being. Allow yourself to be cheered by our laughter and lulled to sleep by our songs; be good and do not worry; I will undertake to arrange your life and make it pleasant to you, even if I am unable to make it intoxicating. Be my wife and my mistress at Venice; you shall be my angel and my nymph again among the glaciers of Switzerland."

XI

By such speeches he allayed my anxiety and led me, fascinated and confiding, to the brink of the abyss. I thanked him lovingly for the trouble he took to persuade me, when he could make me obey with a sign. We embraced affectionately and returned to the salon where our friends awaited us to part us.

However, as the days succeeded one another, Leoni did not take the same trouble to reconcile me to them. He paid less attention to my growing discontent, and when I mentioned it to him, he argued with me less gently. One day indeed he was short with me and bitter; I saw that I offended him; I determined to complain no more; but I began to suffer really and to be genuinely unhappy. I waited with resignation until Leoni snatched a few moments to come to me. To be sure he was so kind and loving at those times that I deemed myself foolish and cowardly to have suffered so. My courage and my confidence would revive for a few days; but those days of encouragement became more and more infrequent. Leoni, seeing that I was meek and submis-

sive, still treated me with consideration; but he no longer noticed my melancholy. Ennui devoured me, Venice became hateful to me; its canals, its gondolas, its sky, everything about it was distasteful. During the nights of card-playing I wandered alone on the terrace at the top of the house; I shed bitter tears; I recalled my home, my heedless youth, my kind, foolish mother, my poor father, so loving and so good-natured, and even my aunt, with her petty worries and her long sermons. It seemed to me that I was really homesick, that I longed to fly, to go home and throw myself at my parents' feet, to forget Leoni forever. But if a window opened below me, if Leoni, weary of the game and the heat, came out on the balcony to breathe the fresh air from the canal, I would lean over the rail to look at him, and my heart would beat as during the first days of my passion, when he crossed the threshold of my father's house; if the moon shone upon him and enabled me to distinguish that noble figure beneath the rich fancy costume that he always wore in his own palace, I would thrill with pride and pleasure as on the evening that he led me into that ballroom from which we went forth never to return; if his melodious voice, murmuring a measure from some song, rebounded from the resonant marbles of Venice and rose to my ears, I would feel the tears flowing down my cheeks, as on those evenings among the mountains when he sang me a ballad composed for me in the morning.

A few words which I overheard from the mouth of one of his friends increased my depression and my disgust to an intolerable degree. Among Leoni's twelve intimate associates, the Vicomte de Chalm, who called himself an *émigré* Frenchman, was the one whose attentions were most offensive to me. He was the oldest of them all, and perhaps the cleverest; but underneath his exquisite

manners I detected a sort of cynicism which often revolted me. He was satirical, cold-blooded and insolent; furthermore, he was a man without morals and without heart; but I knew nothing of that, and he displeased me, apart from that. One evening when I was on the balcony, hidden from him by the silk curtains, I heard him say to the Venetian marquis: "Why, where's Juliette?"—That mode of speaking of me brought the blood to my cheeks; I kept perfectly still and listened.—"I don't know," the Venetian replied. "Why, are you so much in love with her?"—"Not too much," was the reply, "but enough."—"And Leoni?"—"Leoni will turn her over to me one of these days."—"What! his own wife?"—"Nonsense, marquis! are you mad?" replied the viscount; "she is a girl he seduced at Brussels; when he has had enough of her, and that will be before long, I will gladly take charge of her. If you want her next after me, marquis, put your name down."—"Many thanks," replied the marquis; "I know how you deprave women, and I should be afraid to succeed you."

I heard no more; I leaned over the balustrade half-dead, and, hiding my face in my shawl, wept with rage and shame.

That same night I called Leoni into my room, and demanded satisfaction for the way I was treated by his friends. He took the insult with a coolness which dealt my heart a mortal blow.—"You are a little fool," he said to me; "you don't know what men are; their thoughts are indiscreet and their words still more so; the rakes are the best of them. A strong woman should laugh at their airs instead of losing her temper."

I fell upon a chair and burst into tears, crying;—"O mother! mother! how low has your daughter fallen!"

Leoni exerted himself to soothe me, and succeeded only

too quickly. He knelt at my feet, kissed my hands and my arms, implored me to treat with scorn a foolish remark and to think of nothing but him and his love.

"Alas!" said I, "what am I to think when your friends flatter themselves that they can pick me up as they do your old pipes when you want them no longer."

"Juliette," he replied, "wounded pride makes you bitter and unjust. I have been a libertine, as you know; I have often told you of my youthful disorders; but I thought that I had purified myself in the air of our valley. My friends are still living the life that I used to lead; they know nothing of the six months we passed in Switzerland; they could never understand them. But ought you to misinterpret and forget them?"

I begged his pardon, I shed sweeter tears on his brow and his beautiful hair; I strove to forget the uncomfortable impression I had received. I flattered myself moreover that he would make his friends understand that I was not a kept mistress and that they must respect me; but he either did not choose to do it or did not think of it, for on the next and following days I saw that Monsieur de Chalm's eyes followed me and solicited me with revolting insolence.

I was in despair, but I did not know which way to turn to avoid the evils into which I had plunged. I was too proud to be happy, and loved Leoni too dearly to leave him.

One evening I had gone into the salon to get a book I had left on the piano. Leoni was surrounded by a select party of his friends; they were grouped around the tea table at the end of the room, which was dimly lighted, and did not notice my presence. The viscount seemed to be in one of his wickedest teasing moods.

"Baron Leone de Leoni," he said in a dry, mocking

"No, that is too near; to Palermo, I have never been there."

"But when you arrive anywhere," said the marquis, "you must cut something of a figure for a few days."

"Providence will provide for that," said Leoni, "she is the mother of the audacious."

"But not of the indolent," said Chalm, "and I know nobody on earth more indolent than you. What the devil did you do in Switzerland with your infanta for six months?"

"Silence on that subject!" retorted Leoni; "I loved her, and I'll throw my glass at the head of any man who sees anything to laugh at in that."

"Leoni, you drink too much," observed another of his friends.

"Perhaps so, but I have said what I have said."

The viscount didn't take up this species of challenge, and the marquis made haste to change the conversation.

"Why, in God's name, aren't you playing?" he asked Leoni.

"*Ventre-Dieu!* I play every day to oblige you, although I detest gambling; you will make a fool of me with your cards and your dice, and your pockets like the cask of the Danaides, and your insatiable hands! You are nothing but a parcel of fools, the whole of you. When you have made a hit, instead of taking a rest and enjoying life like true sybarites, you keep at it until you have spoiled your luck."

"Luck, luck!" said the marquis, "everyone knows what luck is."

"Many thanks!" said Leoni, "I no longer care to know; I was too thoroughly currycombed at Paris.

When I think that there is one man, whom may God in his mercy consign to all the devils——!"

"Well?" said the viscount.

"A man," said the marquis, "of whom we must rid ourselves at any cost, if we wish to enjoy liberty again on this earth. But, patience, there are two of us against him."

"Never fear," said Leoni, "I have not so far forgotten the old customs of the country that I don't know how to clear my path of the man who stands in my way. Except for my devil of a love-affair, which filled my brain, I had a fine chance in Brussels."

"You?" said the marquis; "you never did anything in that line, and you will never have the courage."

"Courage?" cried Leoni, half-rising, with flashing eyes.

"No extravagance," replied the marquis, with that horrifying sang-froid which they all had. "Let us understand each other. You have courage to kill a bear or a wild boar, but you have too many sentimental and philosophical ideas in your head to kill a man."

"That may be," said Leoni, resuming his seat, "but I am not sure."

"You don't mean to play at Palermo, then?" said the viscount.

"To the devil with your gambling! If I could get up a passion for something—hunting, or a horse, or an olive-skinned Calabrian—I would go next summer, and shut myself up in the Abruzzi and pass a few more months forgetting you all."

"Rekindle your passion for Juliette," said the viscount, with a sneer.

"I will not rekindle my passion for Juliette," replied

Leoni, angrily, "but I will strike you if you mention her name again."

"We must make him drink some tea," said the viscount, "he's dead drunk."

"Come, come, Leoni," cried the marquis, grasping his arm, "you treat us horribly to-night. What's the matter with you, in God's name? Are we no longer friends? do you doubt us? Speak."

"No, I don't doubt you," said Leoni; "you have given me back as much as I took from you. I know what you are worth; good and bad, I judge you all, without prejudice or prepossession."

"Ah! I should like to hear your judgment!" said the viscount, between his teeth.

"Come, come! more punch! more punch!" cried the other guests. "There's no possibility of any more fun unless we drink Chalm and Leoni under the table. They have reached the stage of nervous spasms; let's put them in a trance."

"Yes, my friends, my very dear friends!" cried Leoni, "punch! friendship! life—a jolly life! The deuce take the cards! they are what make me ugly. Here's to drunkenness! Here's to the ladies! Here's to sloth, tobacco, music and money! Here's to the young maids and old countesses! Here's to the devil! Here's to love! Here's to all that makes one live! Everything is good when one is well enough constituted to make the most of it and enjoy it."

They all rose, shouting a drinking song. I fled; I ran upstairs with the frenzy of one who thinks herself pursued, and fell in a swoon on my bedroom floor.

XII

The next morning they found me lying on the floor, as stiff and cold as a corpse; I had brain fever. I believe that Leoni was attentive to me; it seemed to me that I saw him frequently at my bedside, but I had only a vague memory of it. After three days I was out of danger. Then Leoni came from time to time to inquire for me, and to pass part of the afternoon with me. He left the palace every evening at six o'clock, and did not return until next morning. That fact I learned later.

Of all that I had heard I had clearly understood but one thing, which was the cause of my despair: it was that Leoni no longer loved me. Until then I had always refused to believe it, although his conduct should have made it clear to me. I resolved to contribute no farther to his ruin, and not to abuse a remnant of compassion and generosity which led him to continue to show me some consideration. I sent for him as soon as I felt strong enough to endure the interview, and told him what I had heard him say about me in the midst of the revel; I kept silence as to all the rest. I could not see clearly in that confused mass of infamous things which the remarks of his friends had caused me to suspect; I did not choose to understand them. Moreover, I was ready to consent to everything: to desertion, despair and death.

I told him that I had decided to go away in a week, and that I would accept nothing from him thenceforth. I had kept my father's pin; by selling it I could obtain much more than I needed to return to Brussels.

The courage with which I spoke, and which the fever doubtless assisted, dealt Leoni an unexpected blow. He said nothing, but paced the floor excitedly; then he began to sob and cry, and fell, gasping for breath, on a chair. Dismayed by his apparent condition, I left my reclining chair in spite of myself, and went to him with an air of solicitude. Thereupon he seized me in his arms and, pressing me frantically to his breast, cried:

"No, no! you shall not leave me; I will never consent to it; if your pride, perfectly just and legitimate as it is, will not let you yield, I will lie at your feet, across this doorway, and I will kill myself if you step over me. No, you shall not go, for I love you passionately; you are the only woman in the world whom I have ever been able to respect and admire after possessing her for six months. What I said was nonsense, and an infamous lie; you do not know, Juliette, oh! you do not know all my misfortunes! you do not know to what I am condemned by the society of a coterie of abandoned men, to what I am impelled by a soul of brass, fire, gold and mud, which I received from heaven and hell in concert! If you will not love me any longer, then I will live no longer. What have I not done, what have I not sacrificed, what faculties have I not debased, to retain my hold upon this execrable life, made execrable by them! What mocking demon is confined in my brain to make me still find attraction in this life at times, and shatter the most sacred ties to plunge into it still deeper? Ah! it is time to have done with it. Since I was born, I have known but one really beautiful, really pure time, and that was when I possessed and adored you. That purged me of all my wickedness, and I should have remained in the chalet under the snow; I should have died at peace with you, with God and with myself, whereas here I am ruined in

your eyes and my own. Juliette, Juliette! mercy, pardon! I feel that my heart will break if you abandon me. I am young still; I want to live, to be happy, and I never shall be, except with you. Will you punish me with death for a blasphemous word that escaped my lips when I was intoxicated? Do you believe what I said? can you believe it? Oh! how I suffer! how I have suffered for a fortnight! I have secrets which burn my vitals; if only I could tell them to you!—but you would never be able to listen to the end."

"I know them," I cried; "and if you loved me, I would care nothing for all the rest."

"You know them!" he exclaimed with an air of bewilderment; "you know them? What do you know?"

"I know that you are ruined, that this palace is not yours, that you have squandered an enormous sum in three months; I know that you have become accustomed to this adventurous life and these dissipated habits. I do not know how you reconstruct your fortune so quickly or how you throw it away; I fancy that gambling is your ruin and your resource; I believe that you have about you a deplorable circle of friends, and that you are struggling against shockingly bad advice; I believe that you are on the brink of a precipice, but that you can still avoid it."

"Well, yes, that is all true," he cried; "you know everything! and you will forgive me?"

"If I had not lost your love," I replied, "I should not consider it a loss to leave this palace, this luxury and this society, all of which are hateful to me. However poor we may be, we can always live as we lived in our chalet—there, or somewhere else, if you are tired of Switzerland. If you still loved me, you would not be ruined; for you would think neither of gambling nor of

intemperance, nor of any of the passions which you commemorated in an infernal toast; if you loved me, you would pay what you owe with what you have left, and we would go and bury ourselves and love each other in some secluded spot where I would quickly forget what I have learned, where I would never remind you of it, where I could not suffer because of it—if you loved me!"

"Oh! I do love you, I do love you!" he cried; "let us go! let us fly, save me! Be my benefactress, my angel, as you have always been! Come, and forgive me!"

He threw himself at my feet and all that the most fervent passion can dictate, he said to me with so much warmth that I believed it—and I shall always believe it. Leoni deceived me, degraded me, and loved me at the same time.

One day, to evade the keen reproaches that I heaped upon him, he tried to rehabilitate the passion of gambling.

"Gambling," he said, with the specious eloquence which had only too much power over me, "is a passion much more energetic than love. More fruitful in terrible dramas, it is more intoxicating, more heroic in the acts which combine to attain its end. I must say it, alas! that while that end is vile in appearance, the ardor is irresistible, the audacity is sublime, the sacrifices are blind and unlimited. You must know, Juliette, that women never inspire such passions. Gold has a power superior to theirs. In strength, in courage, in devotion, in perseverance, love, compared with the gambler's stake, is only a feeble child whose efforts are deserving of pity. How many men have you seen sacrifice to a mistress that inestimable treasure, that priceless necessity, that condition of existence without which we feel that existence is unendurable—*honor?* I have known very few whose

devotion goes beyond the sacrifice of life. Every day the gambler sacrifices his honor and lives on. The gambler is keen, he is stoical, he takes his triumph coolly, he takes his downfall coolly; he passes in a few hours from the lowest ranks of society to the highest; in a few hours more he goes down again to his starting-point, and all without change of attitude or expression. In a few hours, without leaving the spot to which his demon chains him, he incurs all the vicissitudes of life, he passes through all the phases of fortune which represent the different social conditions. By turns king and beggar, he climbs the long ladder at a single stride, always calm, always self-controlled, always sustained by his sturdy ambition, always spurred on by the intense thirst that consumes him. What will he be an hour hence? prince or slave? How will he come forth from that den? stripped naked or bent beneath the weight of gold? What does it matter? He will return to-morrow to remake his fortune, to lose it or to triple it. The one thing impossible for him is repose; he is like the storm bird that cannot live without raging winds and an angry sea. He is accused of loving gold! he loves it so little that he throws it away by the handful. That gift of hell is powerless to benefit him or satisfy his craving. He is no sooner rich than he is in great haste to be ruined in order to enjoy that nerve-racking, terrible emotion without which life is tasteless to him. What is gold in his eyes? Less in itself than grains of sand in yours. But gold is to him an emblem of the blessings and the evils which he seeks and defies. Gold is his plaything, his enemy, his God, his dream, his demon, his mistress, his poesy: it is the ghost which haunts him, which he attacks, grasps, and then allows to escape, that he may have the pleasure of renewing the struggle and of engaging once more in a hand-to-hand

conflict with destiny. It is magnificent, I tell you! It is absurd, to be sure, and should be condemned, because energy thus employed is of no advantage to society, because the man who expends his strength for such an end robs his fellow-men of all the good he might have done them with less selfishness; but when you condemn him, do not despise him, ye narrow-minded creatures who are capable of neither good nor evil; do not gaze with dismay at the colossus of will-power, struggling thus on a tempestuous sea for the sole purpose of exerting his strength and forcing the sea back. His selfishness leads him into the midst of fatigues and dangers, as yours binds you down to patient, hard-working occupations. How many men in the whole world can you think of who work for their country without thinking of themselves? He voluntarily isolates himself, sets himself apart; he stakes his present, his repose, his honor. He dooms himself to suffering, to fatigue. Deplore his error if you will, but do not compare yourself with him, in the pride of your heart, in order to glorify yourself at his expense. Let his fatal example serve simply to console you for your own harmless nullity."

"O heaven!" I replied, "upon what sophistries your heart feeds, or else how weak my mind must be! What! the gambler is not despicable, you say? O Leoni, why, having so much strength of mind, have you not employed it in overcoming yourself in the interest of your fellow-men?"

"Apparently, because I have misunderstood life," he replied in a bitter, ironical tone. "Because, instead of appearing on a sumptuously appointed stage, I appeared in an open-air theatre; because, instead of spending my time declaiming specious moral apothegms on the stage of society and playing heroic rôles, I amused myself by

performing feats of strength and risking my life on a tight-rope, in order to give full play to the strength of my muscles. And even that comparison amounts to nothing: the tight-rope dancer has his vanity as well as the tragedian or the philanthropic orator. The gambler has none; he is neither admired nor applauded nor envied. His triumphs are so short-lived and so hazardous that it is hardly worth while to speak of them. On the other hand, society condemns him, the common herd despises him, especially on the days when he has lost. All his charlatanism consists in showing a bold front, in falling manfully before a group of selfish creatures who do not even look at him, they are so engrossed by their own mental struggles! If in his swift hours of good luck he finds some enjoyment in gratifying the commonplace vanities of luxury, it is a very brief tribute that he pays to human weaknesses. Ere long he will go and sacrifice remorselessly those childish joys of an instant to the devouring activity of his mind, to that infernal fever which does not permit him to live for one whole day as other men live. Vanity in him! Why, he has not the time for it, he has something else to do! Has he not his heart to torture, his brain to overturn, his blood to drink, his flesh to torment, his gold to lose, his life to endanger, to reconstruct, to pull down, to wrench, to tear in pieces, to risk altogether, to reconquer, bit by bit, to put in his purse, to toss on the table every moment? Ask the sailor if he can live on shore, the bird if he can do without his wings, man's heart if it can do without emotions. The gambler then is not criminal in himself; it is always his social position that makes him so, his family, whom he ruins or dishonors. But suppose him to be like me, alone in the world, without attachments, without kindred near enough in degree to be taken into account, free,

thrown on his own resources, satiated or deceived in love, as I have so often been, and you will pity his error, you will regret for his sake that he was born with a sanguine and vain rather than with a bilious and reserved temperament. How do you argue that the gambler is in the same category as brigands and filibusters? Ask governments why they derive a part of their revenues from such a shameful source? They alone are guilty of offering those terrible temptations to restlessness, those deplorable resources to despair. But although love of gambling is not in itself so degrading as the majority of other passions, it is the most dangerous of all, the keenest, the most irresistible, and attended by the most wretched consequences. It is almost impossible for the gambler not to dishonor himself for a few years. As for myself," he added, with a gloomier manner and in a less vibrant voice, "after enduring for a long time this life of torture and convulsions with the chivalrous heroism which was the foundation of my character, I allowed myself to be corrupted at last; that is to say, my strength being gradually exhausted by this constant conflict, I lost the stoical courage with which I had accepted reverses, endured the privations of ghastly poverty, recommenced the building of my fortune, sometimes with a single sou, waited, hoped, advanced warily and step by step, sacrificing a whole month to repair the losses of a single day. Such was my life for a long while. But at last, weary of suffering, I began to seek outside of my own will, outside of my virtue,—for it must be admitted that the gambler has a virtue of his own,—the means of regaining more quickly what I had lost; I borrowed and from that moment I was lost myself. At first a man suffers cruelly when he finds himself in an indelicate position; but eventually he gets used to it, as to everything else, becomes numb and indifferent. I did

as all gamblers and spendthrifts do; I became dangerous and harmful to my friends. I heaped upon their heads the evils which I had for a long time bravely borne on my own. It was very culpable; I risked my own honor, then the honor and the lives of my nearest and dearest, as I had risked my money. There is this that is horrible about gambling, that it gives you none of those lessons which it is impossible to forget. It is always there, beckoning to you! That inexhaustible pile of gold is always before your eyes. It follows you about, it coaxes you, it bids you hope, and sometimes it keeps its promises, restores your courage, re-establishes your credit, seems to postpone dishonor again; but dishonor is consummated the moment that honor is voluntarily put in peril."

Here Leoni hung his head and relapsed into moody silence; the confession that perhaps he had intended to make to me died on his lips. I saw by his shame and his depression that it was quite useless to expose the sophistical arguments of his disordered brain; his conscience had already undertaken that task.

"Listen to me," he said, when we were reconciled. "To-morrow I close the house to all my friends and go to Milan, where I have to collect a considerable sum that is still due me. While I am gone, take good care of yourself, get well, arrange all the claims of our creditors, and make preparations for our departure. In a week, or a fortnight at most, I will return and pay our debts, take you away, and live with you wherever you choose, forever."

I believed all he said; I consented to everything. He went away and the house was closed. I did not wait until I was entirely well before I set at work to put everything in order and to inspect the tradesmen's bills.

I hoped that Leoni would write me on arriving at Milan as he had promised. It was more than a week before I heard from him. He wrote me at last that he was sure of collecting much more money than he owed, but that he would be obliged to remain away three weeks instead of two. I resigned myself to wait. At the end of three weeks another letter informed me that he was compelled to wait for his money until the end of the month. I was discouraged. Alone in that vast palace, where, in order to avoid the insolent attentions of Leoni's boon-companions, I was obliged to conceal myself, to lower my curtains and sustain a sort of siege, consumed with anxiety, ill and weak, abandoned to the blackest thoughts and to all the remorse which the sting of unhappiness arouses, I was tempted many times to put an end to my miserable life.

But I was not at the end of my sufferings.

XIII

One morning, when I thought that I was alone in the great salon, where I sat with an open book on my knees, never thinking of glancing at it, I heard a noise near me, and throwing off my lethargy, I saw the hateful face of Vicomte de Chalm. I uttered an exclamation, and was about to turn him out of doors, when he apologized profusely with an air that was at once respectful and ironical, and I was at a loss for a reply. He said that he had forced my door by virtue of the authority contained in a letter from Leoni, who had specially instructed him to

come to inquire about my health and report to him. I put no faith in this pretext, and was on the point of telling him so. He gave me no time, however, but began to talk himself with such impudent self-possession, that it would have been impossible for me to turn him out unless by calling my servants. He had resolved to take no hints.

"I see, madame," he said to me, with a hypocritical air of friendly interest, "that you are aware of the baron's unfortunate position. Be assured that my slender resources are at his disposal; unluckily they amount to very little in the way of satisfying the prodigality of such a magnificent character. What consoles me is that he is brave, enterprising and ingenious. He has rebuilt his fortune several times; he will do it again. But you will have to suffer, madame; you who are so young and delicate, so worthy of a happier lot! It is on your account that I am profoundly distressed by Leoni's follies, and by all those he has still to commit before he obtains what he needs. Poverty is a horrible thing at your age, and when one has always lived in luxury——"

I interrupted him abruptly, for I fancied that I could see what he was coming to with his insulting compassion. I did not yet realize that creature's baseness.

Divining my suspicion, he made haste to destroy it. He gave me to understand, with all the courtesy that his cold and cunning tongue could command, that he considered himself too old and too poor to offer me his support, but that an immensely wealthy young English lord, whom he had introduced to me and who had called on me several times, entrusted to him the honorable mission of tempting me by magnificent promises. I had not the strength to reply to that insult. I was so weak and so prostrated that I began to weep, without speaking. The

infamous Chalm thought that I was wavering, and, in order to hasten my decision, informed me that Leoni would not return to Venice, that he was fast bound at the feet of Princess Zagorolo, and that he had given him full power to conclude this affair with me.

Indignation at last restored the presence of mind which I needed to overwhelm that man with contempt and obloquy. But he soon recovered from his confusion.

"I see, madame," he said, "that your youth and innocence have been cruelly abused, and I am incapable of returning hatred for hatred, for you misunderstand me, and therefore accuse me, whereas I know and esteem you. I will listen to your reproaches and your insults with all the stoicism which genuine devotion should have at its command, and then I will tell you into what an abyss you have fallen and from what depths of degradation I desire to rescue you."

He said this with such emphasis and so calmly that my credulous nature was in a measure subjugated. For an instant I thought that I had, perhaps, misjudged a sincere friend in the mental disturbance caused by my misfortunes. Fascinated by the impudent serenity of his features, I forgot the disgusting words I had heard him use, and I gave him time to speak. He saw that he must make the most of that moment of hesitation and weakness, and he made haste to give me information concerning Leoni that bore the stamp of hateful truth.

"I admire," he said, "the way in which your easily persuaded and confiding heart has clung so long to such a character. It is true that nature has endowed him with irresistible fascinations, and that he is extraordinarily skilful in concealing his villainy and assuming the outward appearance of loyalty. All the cities in Europe know him for a delightful rake. Only a very few per-

sons in Italy know that he is capable of any villainy to gratify his innumerable whims. To-day you will see him take Lovelace for his model, to-morrow the shepherd Fido. As he is something of a poet, he is capable of receiving all sorts of impressions, of understanding and mimicking all the virtues, of studying and playing all varieties of rôles. He believes that he really feels all that he imitates, and sometimes he identifies himself so thoroughly with the character he has chosen, that he feels its passions and grasps its grandeur. But, as he is vile and corrupt at bottom, as there is nothing in him save affectation and caprice, vice suddenly springs to life in his blood, the tedium of his hypocrisy drives him into habits directly contrary to those which seemed natural to him. They who have seen him only in one of his deceptive disguises are amazed and think he has gone mad; they who know that it is his nature to be true in nothing, smile and wait quietly for some fresh invention."

Although this shocking portrait revolted me so that I was almost suffocated, yet it seemed to me that I saw in it some shafts of blinding light. I was struck dumb, my nerves contracted. I looked at Chalm with a terror-stricken expression; he congratulated himself on his success and continued:

"This revelation of his character surprises you; if you had had more experience, my dear lady, you would know that such a character is very common in the world. To have it to perfection, one must have a very superior mind; and the reason that many fools do not assume it is that they are incapable of sustaining it. You will notice that a vain man of moderate parts will almost always shut himself up in a sort of obstinacy which he deems peculiar to himself and which consoles him for another's success. He will admit that he is less brilliant, but will

claim that he is more reliable and more useful. The world is inhabited by none but intolerable idiots and dangerous madmen. Everything considered, I prefer the latter; I have prudence enough to protect myself from them and tolerance enough to be amused by them. It is much better to laugh with a spiteful buffoon than to yawn with a tiresome virtuous man. That is why you have seen me living on intimate terms with a man whom I neither like nor esteem. Moreover I was attracted to this house by your amiable manners, by your angelic sweetness; I felt a fatherly affection for you. Young Lord Edwards, who from his window saw that you passed many hours motionless and pensive on your balcony, confided to me the violent passion he has conceived for you. I introduced him here, frankly and earnestly hoping that you would remain no longer in the painful and humiliating position in which Leoni's desertion left you; I knew that Lord Edwards had a heart worthy of yours, and that he would make your life happy and honorable. I have come to-day to renew my efforts and to avow his love, which you have not chosen to understand."

I bit my handkerchief in my indignation; but, absorbed by one fixed idea, I rose and said to him with emphasis:

"You claim that Leoni has authorized you to make me these infamous propositions: prove it! yes, monsieur, prove it!"

And I shook his arm with convulsive force.

"*Parbleu!* my dear girl," the villain retorted with his hateful sang-froid, "it's very easy to prove. But how is it that you don't understand it? Leoni no longer loves you; he has another mistress."

"Prove it!" I repeated, thoroughly exasperated.

"In a moment, in a moment," said he. "Leoni is in

great need of money, and there are some women of a certain age whose countenance may be advantageous."

"Prove to me all that you say," I cried, "or I turn you out of the house instantly."

"Very well," he replied, not at all disconcerted; "but let us make a bargain: if I have lied to you, I will leave the house and never put my foot inside it again; but if I told you the truth when I said that Leoni has authorized me to speak to you about Lord Edwards, you will allow me to come again this evening with him."

As he spoke he took from his pocket a letter, on the envelope of which I recognized Leoni's handwriting.

"Yes!" I cried, carried away by the irresistible desire to know my fate; "yes, I promise."

The marquis slowly unfolded the letter and handed it to me. I read:

"MY DEAR VISCOUNT,

"Although you often cause me fits of anger in which I would gladly strangle you, I believe that you are really my friend and that your offers of service are sincere. However, I will not take advantage of them. I have something better than that, and my affairs are going on famously once more. The only thing that embarrasses me and frightens me is Juliette. You are right: the moment that she knows, she will upset my plans. But what am I to do? I have the most idiotic and invincible attachment for her. Her despair takes away all my strength. I cannot see her weep without falling at her feet. You think that she will allow herself to be corrupted? No, you do not know her; she will never allow herself to be persuaded by greed. But anger? you say. Yes, that is more probable. What woman is there who will not do from anger what she would not do for love?

Juliette is proud, I have become perfectly certain of that lately. If you tell her a little ill of me, if you give her to understand that I am unfaithful—perhaps!—But, great God! I cannot think of it without feeling as if my heart were being torn to pieces.—Try: if she yields, I will despise her and forget her; if she resists—why, then we will see. Whatever the result of your efforts, I have either a great calamity to dread or a great heartache to endure."

"Now," said the marquis when I had finished reading, "I am going to fetch Lord Edwards."

I hid my face in my hands and sat for a long time without moving or speaking. Then I suddenly hid the hateful letter in my bosom and rang violently.

"Let my maid pack a portmanteau in five minutes," I said to the servant, "and tell Beppo to bring the gondola."

"What do you mean to do, my dear child?" said the astonished viscount; "where do you propose to go?"

"To Lord Edwards, of course," I retorted with a bitter irony of which he did not understand the meaning. "Go and tell him," I added; "say that you have earned your pay and that I am flying to him."

He began to understand that I was frantic with rage and was jeering at him. He paused, uncertain what to do. I left the salon without another word, and went to put on my travelling dress. I came down again, attended by my maid, who carried the portmanteau. As I was stepping into the gondola, I felt that a trembling hand caught my cloak and held me back; I turned and saw Chalm, greatly disturbed and alarmed.

"Where in heaven's name are you going?" he said in an altered voice.

I was triumphant to have destroyed his sang-froid, the sang-froid of a villain, at last.

"I am going to Milan," I said, "and I am going to make you lose the two or three hundred sequins Lord Edwards has promised you."

"One moment," shouted the viscount furiously, "give me the letter or you shall not go."

"Beppo!" I cried, wild with anger and terror, darting toward the gondolier, "save me from this ruffian, he is breaking my arm!"

All Leoni's servants, finding me a mild mistress, were devoted to me. Beppo, a silent, resolute fellow, seized me about the waist and lifted me from the stairs. At the same time he pushed against the lowest step with his foot, and the gondola shot out into the canal just as he deposited me on the seat with marvellous dexterity and strength. Chalm was very near being dragged into the water. He disappeared, after giving me a look which was a vow of everlasting hatred and implacable revenge.

XIV

I reached Milan after travelling night and day without giving myself time to rest or reflect. I alighted at the inn which Leoni had given me as his address, and asked for him; they looked at me in amazement.

"He does not live here," the clerk replied. "He came here when he arrived and hired a small room where he put his luggage; but he only comes here in the morning to get his letters and be shaved; then he goes away."

"But where are his lodgings?" I asked.

I saw that the man looked at me with curiosity and

uncertainty, and, whether from a feeling of respect or of compassion, could not make up his mind to reply. I was discreet enough not to insist, and bade them take me to the room Leoni had hired.

"If you know where he can be found at this time of day," I said to the clerk, "send for him and say that his sister has arrived."

In about an hour Leoni appeared and held out his arms to embrace me.

"Wait a moment," I said, drawing back, "if you have deceived me hitherto, do not add another crime to those you have already committed against me. Here, look at this letter; did you write it? If somebody has imitated your handwriting, tell me quickly, for I hope that it is so, and I am suffocating."

Leoni glanced at the letter and turned as pale as death.

"*Mon Dieu!*" I cried, "I hoped that I had been deceived! I came to you, almost certain of finding that you knew nothing of this infamy. I said to myself: 'He has done much that is bad, he has deceived me before; but, in spite of everything, he loves me. If it is true that I am an annoyance to him and that I stand in his way, he would have told me so when I felt the courage to leave him, barely a month ago; whereas he threw himself at my feet and implored me to remain. If he is ambitious and a schemer, he would not have kept me, for I have no fortune, and my love is of no advantage to him in any way. Why should he complain of my importunity now? He has but a word to say to send me away. He knows that I am proud; he need not fear my prayers or my reproaches. Why should he wish to degrade me?'"

I could not continue; a flood of tears choked my voice and arrested my words.

"Why should I wish to degrade you?" cried Leoni beside himself with emotion; "to spare my tattered conscience another cause for remorse! You cannot understand that, Juliette. It is easy to see that you have never committed a crime!"

He paused; I sank into a chair and we faced each other, equally overcome.

"Poor angel!" he cried at last, "did you deserve to be the companion and victim of such a knave as I am? What did you do to God before you were born, unfortunate child, that he should throw you into the arms of a villain who is killing you with shame and despair? Poor Juliette! poor Juliette!"

And in his turn he shed a torrent of tears.

"Very well," I said; "I came to hear your justification or my sentence. You are guilty, I forgive you and I go."

"Never say that again!" he cried vehemently. "Strike that word out of our interviews forever. When you intend to leave me, make your escape adroitly, so that I cannot prevent you; but so long as a drop of blood is left in my veins, I will not consent to it. You are my wife, you are my wife, you belong to me and I love you. I can kill you with grief, but I cannot let you go."

"I will accept the grief and death," I said, "if you tell me that you still love me."

"Yes, I love you, I love you!" he cried, with his usual transports. "I love no one but you, and I never shall be able to love any other!"

"Wretch! you lie," I said to him. "You have been paying court to the Princess Zagarolo."

"True, but I detest her."

"What!" I cried, in utter amazement. "Why do you follow her then? What shameful secrets are hidden

beneath all these riddles? Chalm tried to persuade me that a vile ambition bound you to that woman; that she was old—that she paid you. Ah! what things you make me say!"

"Do not believe these calumnies," said Leoni, "the princess is young and beautiful; I am in love with her."

"Very well," I said, with a profound sigh, "I would rather have you unfaithful than dishonored. Love her, love her dearly, for she is rich and you are poor! If you love her dearly, wealth and poverty will be mere words between you. I loved you so, and, although I had nothing to live on but what you gave me, I did not blush on that account; now, I should debase myself and I should be unendurable to you. So let me go. Your obstinacy in keeping me here, just to kill me by torture, is both foolish and cruel."

"That is true," said Leoni, gloomily. "Go! I am a villain to try to prevent you."

He left the room with an air of desperation. I threw myself on my knees, I prayed to heaven to give me strength, I invoked the memory of my mother, and I rose to make once more my brief preparations for departure.

When my portmanteau was locked, I ordered post-horses for the same evening, and threw myself on the bed to wait. I was so overdone by fatigue and so prostrated by despair, that I felt, as I fell asleep, something resembling the peace of the grave.

After an hour's sleep, I was aroused by Leoni's passionate kisses.

"It is of no use for you to think of going away," he said; "it is beyond my strength. I have sent away your horses and had your trunk unpacked. I have been out walking alone in the country, and I have done my ut-

most to force myself to give you up. I resolved not to bid you adieu. I went to the princess's and tried to persuade myself that I loved her; I hate her and I love you. You must stay."

These constant agitations weakened my mind as well as my body. I began to lose the faculty of reasoning; evil and good, esteem and contempt became vague sounds, words which I no longer cared to understand, and which frightened me as much as if they were interminable columns of figures which I was told to add. Leoni had thenceforth more than a moral influence over me; he had a magnetic power which I could not escape. His glance, his voice, his tears acted on my nerves no less than on my heart. I was simply a machine turned any way at his pleasure.

I forgave him. I abandoned myself to his caresses; I promised him whatever he chose. He told me that the Princess Zagarolo, being a widow, had thought of marrying him; that the brief and trivial fancy he had had for her had made her believe in his love; that she had foolishly compromised herself for him; and that he must either spare her pride and cut loose from her gradually, or have trouble with the whole family.

"If it were simply a matter of fighting with all her brothers, cousins and uncles," he said, "I should worry very little about it; but they will act as great noblemen, denounce me as a *carbonaro*, and have me thrown into prison, where I may have to wait ten years before the authorities will deign to look into my case."

I listened to all these absurd fables with the credulity of a child. Leoni had never taken any part in politics, but I was still fond of persuading myself that all that was problematical in his life was connected with some

great enterprise of that kind. I consented to pass for his sister in the hotel, to go out seldom, and never with him—in short, to leave him absolutely at liberty to leave me at any moment at a nod from the princess.

XV

That life was perfectly frightful, but I endured it. The tortures of jealousy had been unknown to me hitherto; now they awoke, and I exhausted them all. I spared Leoni the tedium of combating them; indeed I had not enough strength left to express them. I resolved to allow myself to die in silence; I felt sick enough to hope for death. Ennui consumed me at Milan, even more than at Venice; I suffered more, and had less distraction. Leoni lived openly with the Princess Zagarolo. He passed the evening in her box at the play, or at some ball with her. He made his escape to come to see me for an instant, then returned to sup with her, and did not come back to the hotel until six o'clock in the morning. He went to bed utterly exhausted and often in ill-humor. He rose at noon, taciturn and distraught, and went to drive with his mistress. I often saw them pass. Leoni when with her had the same discreetly triumphant air, the same coquettish bearing, the same fond and happy expression that he once had with me; now I had only his complaints and a narrative of his vexations. To be sure, I preferred to have him come to me careworn and disgusted by his slavery, to being tranquil and indifferent, as sometimes happened. It seemed at those

times that he had forgotten the love he had once had for me and that which I still had for him. He found it altogether natural to confide to me the details of his intimacy with another, and did not perceive that the smile on my face as I listened to him was a mute convulsion of pain.

One evening, at sunset, I was coming out of the cathedral, where I had prayed fervently to God to call me back to him and to accept my sufferings in expiation of my faults. I walked slowly through the magnificent portal and leaned from time to time against a pillar, for I was very weak. A slow fever was consuming me. The excitement of prayer and the atmosphere of the church had bathed me in a cold perspiration. I resembled a spectre risen from the sepulchral vaults of the edifice to look once more upon the last rays of the sun. A man who had been following me for some time, without attracting my attention particularly, spoke to me, and I turned, without surprise or alarm, with the apathy of a dying woman. I recognized Henryet.

Instantly, the memory of my home and my family awoke in me with a violent throb. I forgot that young man's strange behavior towards me, the terrible power that he wielded over Leoni, his former love, which I had welcomed so coldly, and the detestation I had felt for him afterward. I thought only of my father and mother, and eagerly offering him my hand, I overwhelmed him with questions. He was in no hurry to reply, although he seemed touched by my emotion and my eagerness.

"Are you alone here?" he said to me; "can I talk to you without exposing you to any danger?"

"I am alone; no one here knows me or pays any attention to me. Let us sit down on this stone bench, for I am not well; and, for the love of heaven, tell me

about my parents! It is a whole year since I have heard their names."

"Your parents!" said Henryet sadly; "there is one of them who no longer weeps for you."

"My father is dead!" I cried, rising. Henryet did not reply. I fell back, utterly crushed, on the bench, and said under my breath: "My God, who wilt soon reunite us, bid him forgive me!"

"Your mother," said Henryet, "was ill a long while. Then she tried to find relief in society; but she had lost her beauty with much weeping, and could find no consolation there."

"My father dead," I said, clasping my nerveless hands, "my mother aged and heartbroken! What of my aunt?"

"Your aunt tries to console your mother by proving that you do not deserve her regrets; but your mother will not listen to her and fades more and more every day in solitude and weariness. And you, madame?"

Henryet uttered these last three words in a chilling tone, in which, however, I could detect compassion beneath the apparent contempt.

"I, as you see, am dying."

He took my hand and tears came to his eyes.

"Poor girl!" he said to me; "it is not my fault. I did all that I could to keep you from falling over the precipice, but you insisted."

"Do not speak of that," I said; "it is impossible for me to discuss it with you. Tell me if my mother tried to find me after my flight?"

"Your mother sought you, but not earnestly enough. Poor woman! she was thunderstruck and lost her presence of mind. There is no vigor in the blood that you inherit."

"That is true," said I indifferently. "We were all indolent and placid in my family. Did my mother hope that I would return?"

"She hoped so, foolishly and childishly. She still expects you and will expect you till her last breath."

I began to sob. Henryet let me weep without saying a word. I believe that he was weeping too. I wiped my eyes to ask him if my mother had been distressed by my dishonor, if she blushed for me, if she still dared to mention my name.

"She has it always on her lips," he replied. "She tells her grief to everybody; people are a little tired of the story now, and they smile when your mother begins to sob; or else they avoid her, saying: 'Here comes Madame Ruyter to tell us about her daughter's abduction again!'"

I listened to this without anger and said, raising my eyes to his:

"And do you despise me, Henryet?"

"I no longer love you or esteem you," he replied; "but I pity you and I am at your service. My purse is at your disposal. Do you wish to write to your mother? Would you like me to take you back to her? Speak, and do not fear to abuse me. I am not acting from affection but from a sense of duty. You have no idea, Juliette, how much sweeter life becomes to those who lay down rules for themselves and observe them."

I made no reply.

"Do you mean, then, to remain here alone and deserted? How long ago did *your husband* leave you?"

"He has not left me," I replied; "we live together; he objects to my going away, which I have long been planning to do, but which I no longer have the strength to think about."

I relapsed into silence; he gave me his arm as far as our hotel. I did not know when we arrived there. I fancied that I was leaning on Leoni's arm and I strove to conceal my sufferings and say nothing of them.

"Shall I come again to-morrow to learn your intentions?" said Henryet, as he left me at the door.

"Yes," I replied, not thinking that he might meet Leoni.

"At what time?"

"Whenever you choose," I answered with a dazed air.

He came the next day a few moments after Leoni had gone out. I had forgotten that I had given him permission to come, and I exhibited so much surprise that he was obliged to remind me. Thereupon, there came to my mind certain words I had overheard between Leoni and his companions, the meaning of which had hitherto been quite vague in my mind, but which seemed applicable to Henryet and to imply a threat of assassination. I shuddered as I reflected upon the danger to which I exposed him.

"Let us go out," I said in dismay; "you are not safe here."

He smiled, and his face expressed utter contempt for the danger I dreaded.

"Believe me," he said, as I seemed inclined to insist, "the man of whom you speak would not dare raise his hand against me, as he dares not even raise his eyes to mine."

I could not hear Leoni spoken of in that way. Despite all the wrongs he had done me, despite all his faults, he was still dearer to me than all the world. I requested Henryet not to refer to him in such terms before me.

"Overwhelm me with contempt," I said; "reproach me for being a heartless girl, utterly without pride; for

having abandoned the best parents that ever lived; and for trampling on all the laws that are imposed upon my sex; I will take no offence, I will listen to you, weeping, and I will be none the less grateful to you for the offers of service you made me yesterday. But let me respect Leoni's name, it is the only treasure which, in the privacy of my heart, I can still oppose to the malediction of the world."

"Respect Leoni's name!" cried Henryet with a bitter laugh. "Poor woman! However, I will consent if you choose to start for Brussels! Go home and comfort your mother, return to the path of duty, and I promise to leave in peace the villain who has ruined you, and whom I could crush like a wisp of straw."

"Return to my mother!" I replied. "Oh! yes, my heart bids me do it every moment in the day; but my pride forbids me to return to Brussels. How should I be treated by all the women who were jealous of my splendor, and who rejoice now at my degradation?"

"I am afraid, Juliette," said he, "that that is not your strongest reason. Your mother has a country house where you can live with her far away from the hard-hearted world. With your fortune you can live anywhere you please where your disgrace is not known, and where your beauty and your sweet nature would soon bring you new friends. But confess that you do not wish to leave Leoni."

"I do wish to," I replied, weeping, "but I cannot."

"Unfortunate, most unfortunate of women!" said Henryet sadly; "you are naturally good and beautiful, but you lack pride. Where noble pride is lacking, there is nothing to build upon. Poor weak creature! I pity you from the bottom of my soul, for you have profaned your heart, you have soiled it by contact with a vile

heart, you have bent your neck under a hand stained with crime, you love a dastard! I ask myself how I could ever have loved you, but I also ask myself how I could fail to pity you now."

"Why, what in the name of heaven has Leoni done," I demanded, terrified and appalled by his manner and his language, "that you assume the right to speak of him in this way?"

"Do you doubt my right, madame? Do you wish me to tell you why Leoni, who is personally brave,—that is beyond question,—and who is the best swordsman that I know, has never thought fit to pick a quarrel with me, who never touched a sword in my life, and who drove him out of Paris with a word, out of Brussels with a glance?"

"That is inconceivable," I said, in dire distress.

"Is it possible that you don't know whose mistress you are?" continued Henryet earnestly; "has no one ever told you the marvellous adventures of Chevalier Leoni? have you never blushed for having been his accomplice and for having fled with a swindler after robbing your father's shop?"

I uttered a cry of anguish and hid my face in my hands; then I raised my head and exclaimed with all my strength:

"That is false! I never was guilty of such a despicable act! Leoni is no more capable of it than I am. We had not travelled forty leagues on the way to Geneva when Leoni stopped in the middle of the night, asked for a box, and put all the jewels in it to send them back to my father."

"Are you quite sure that he did that?" inquired Henryet with a contemptuous laugh.

"I am sure of it!" I cried; "I saw the box, I saw Leoni put the diamonds into it."

"And you are sure that the box didn't accompany you

all the rest of your journey? you are sure that it wasn't unpacked at Venice?"

These words cast such a dazzling gleam of light into my mind, that I could not avoid seeing what it disclosed. I suddenly remembered what I had previously tried in vain to remember: the first occasion on which my eyes had made the acquaintance of that fatal box. At that moment the three times that I had seen it were perfectly clear in my mind and linked themselves together logically to force me to an irresistible conclusion: the first, the night we passed in the mysterious château, when I saw Leoni put the diamonds in the box; the second, the last night at the Swiss chalet, when I saw Leoni mysteriously disinter the treasure he had entrusted to the earth; the third, the second day of our stay in Venice, when I had found the empty box and the diamond pin on the floor with the packing material. The visit of Thaddeus the Jew, and the five hundred thousand francs which, according to the conversation I had overheard between Leoni and his friends, had been advanced by him at the time of our arrival in Venice, coincided perfectly with the memories of that morning. I wrung my hands, then raised them toward heaven and cried, speaking to myself:

"So everything is lost, even my mother's esteem; everything is poisoned, even the memory of Switzerland! Those six months of love and happiness were devoted to covering up a theft."

"And to eluding the pursuit of the police," added Henryet.

"No! no!" I cried wildly, looking at him as if to question him; "he loved me! it is certain that he loved me! I cannot think of that time without being absolutely certain of his love. He was a thief who had stolen a maid and a jewel-chest, and who loved them both."

Henryet shrugged his shoulders; I realized that I was wandering; and, struggling to recover my reason, I insisted upon knowing the explanation of the incredible power he possessed over Leoni.

"You want to know that?" he said. He reflected a moment, then continued: "I will tell you, I can safely tell you; indeed, it is impossible that you can have lived with him a year without suspecting it. He must have made dupes enough at Venice under your eyes."

"Made dupes! he! how so? Oh! be careful what you say, Henryet! he is burdened with accusations enough already."

"I believe that you are incapable as yet of being his accomplice, Juliette; but beware that you do not become so; be careful for your family's sake. I do not know to what point the impunity of a swindler's mistress extends."

"You are killing me with shame, monsieur; your words are cruel; pray complete your work and break my heart altogether by telling me what gives you the right of life and death, so to speak, over Leoni? Where have you known him? what do you know of his past life? I know nothing of it myself, alas! I have seen so many contradictory things about him that I no longer know whether he is rich or poor, noble or plebeian; I do not even know if the name he bears belongs to him."

"That is the only thing that chance saved him the trouble of stealing," Henryet replied. "His name is really Leone Leoni, and he belongs to one of the noblest families of Venice. His father had a small fortune and occupied the palace in which you recently lived. He had an unbounded fondness for this only son, whose precocious talents indicated a superior mental organization. Leoni was educated with care, and, when he was fifteen

years old, travelled over half of Europe with his tutor. In five years he learned with incredible ease the language, literature and manners of the countries he visited. His father's death brought him back to Venice with his tutor. This tutor was Abbé Zanini, whom you must have seen frequently at your house last winter. I do not know whether you formed an accurate judgment of him; he is a man of vivid imagination, of exquisite mental keenness, of immense learning, but inconceivably immoral and extremely cowardly beneath a hypocritical exterior of tolerance and sound common sense. He had naturally depraved his pupil's conscience, and had replaced a proper understanding of justice and injustice in his mind by an alleged knowledge of life, which consisted in committing all the amusing escapades, all the profitable sins, all the actions, good and evil, which can possibly tempt the human heart. I knew this Zanini at Paris, and I remember hearing him say that one must know how to do evil in order to know how to do good, and that one must be able to find enjoyment in vice in order to be able to find enjoyment in virtue. This man, who is more prudent, more adroit and more cold-blooded than Leoni, is much superior to him in knowledge; and Leoni, carried away by his passions or baulked by his caprices, follows him at a distance, making innumerable false moves which are certain to ruin him in society, and which indeed have already ruined him, since he is at the mercy of a few grasping confederates and a few honest men, whose generosity he will soon tire out."

A deathlike chill froze my blood while Henryet was speaking thus. I had to make an effort to listen to the rest.

XVI

"At the age of twenty," continued Henryet, "Leoni found himself in possession of a reasonably handsome fortune, and entirely in control of his own movements. He was in a most advantageous position to do good; but he found his means inferior to the requirements of his ambition, and pending the time when he should build up a fortune equal to his desires, as a result of I know not what insane or culpable schemes, he squandered his inheritance in two years. His house, which he decorated with the splendor you have seen, was the rendezvous of all the dissipated youths and abandoned women of Italy. Many foreigners, connoisseurs in the matter of fast living, were received there; and thus Leoni, who had already made the acquaintance, during his travels, of many people of fashion, formed the most brilliant connections in all countries and made sure of many invaluable friends.

"As is everywhere the case, schemers and blacklegs succeeded in insinuating themselves into this large circle. I saw in Leoni's company in Paris several faces that aroused my distrust, and whose owners I suspect to-day of forming with him and the Marquis de —— an association of fashionable sharpers. Yielding to their counsels, to Zanini's lessons, or to his natural inclinations, young Leoni seems to have soon tried his hand at cheating at cards. This much is certain, that he became eminently proficient in that art and probably practised it in all the capitals of Europe without arousing the slightest suspicion. When he was absolutely ruined, he left Venice and be-

gan to travel again as an adventurer. At this point the thread of his history escapes me. Zanini, from whom I gleaned a part of what I have told you, claimed to have lost sight of him from that time and to have learned only by means of correspondence, frequently interrupted, of Leoni's innumerable changes of fortune and innumerable intrigues in society. He apologized for having produced such a pupil by saying that Leoni had perverted his doctrines; but he excused the pupil by praising the incredible cleverness, the strength of will and the presence of mind with which he had challenged fate, endured and conquered adversity. At last Leoni came to Paris with his faithful friend the Marquis de ——, whom you know, and it was there that I had an opportunity to see and judge him.

"It was Zanini who introduced him to the Princesse de X——, of whose children he was the tutor. The abbé's superior mental endowments had given him for several years past a less subordinate position in the princess's household than that usually occupied by tutors in great families. He did the honors of the salon, led the conversation, sang beautifully, and managed the concerts.

"Leoni, thanks to his wit and his talents, was welcomed with much warmth, and his company was soon sought with enthusiasm. He acquired in certain circles in Paris the same authority which you have seen him exercise over a whole provincial city. He bore himself magnificently, rarely gambled, and when he did so, always lost immense sums, which the Marquis de —— generally won. This marquis was introduced by Zanini shortly after Leoni's appearance. Although a compatriot of the latter, he pretended not to know him or rather to be prepossessed against him. He whispered in everybody's ear that they had been rivals in love at Venice,

and that, although they were both cured of their passion, they were not cured of their hostility. Thanks to this knavery, no one suspected them of conducting their industry in concert. They carried it on during the whole winter without arousing the least suspicion. Sometimes they both lost heavily, but more frequently they won, and they lived like princes, each in his own way. One day, a friend of mine, who had lost a large amount to Leoni, detected an almost imperceptible signal between him and the marquis. He said nothing, but watched them both closely for several days. One evening, when we had both bet on the same side, and lost as usual, he came to me and said:

"'Look at those two Italians; I strongly suspect and am almost certain that they cheat in concert. I have to leave Paris on very urgent business; I leave to you the task of following up my discovery and warning your friends, if there is occasion to do so. You are a discreet and prudent man; you will not act, I hope, without being quite sure what you are doing. In any event, if you have trouble with the fellows, do not fail to give them my name as the one who first accused them, and write to me; I will undertake to settle the dispute with one of them.'

"He gave me his address and left Paris. I watched the two knights of industry and acquired absolute certainty that my friend had made no mistake. I discovered the whole secret of their knavery one evening at a party given by the Princesse de X——. I at once took Zanini by the arm and led him aside.

"'Are you very well acquainted,' I asked him, 'with the two Venetians whom you introduced here?'

"'Very well,' he answered with much assurance; 'I was the tutor of one of them and the friend of the other.'

"'I congratulate you,' said I, 'they are a pair of blacklegs.'

"I made this assertion with such confidence that he changed countenance despite his constant habit of dissimulation. I suspected him of having an interest in their winnings, and I told him that I proposed to unmask his two countrymen. He was altogether discomposed at that and earnestly entreated me not to do it. He tried to persuade me that I was mistaken. I asked him to take me to his room with the marquis. There I explained myself in a few very plain words, and the marquis, instead of denying the charge, turned pale and fainted. I do not know whether that scene was a comedy played by him and the abbé, but they appeared to me in such distress, the marquis displayed so much shame and remorse, that I was good-natured enough to allow my determination to be shaken. I demanded simply that he should leave France instantly with Leoni. The marquis promised everything; but I proposed to signify my decision to his accomplice in person, and told him to send for him. He kept us waiting a long while; at last he arrived, not humble and trembling like the other, but quivering with rage, and with clenched fists. Perhaps he expected to intimidate me by his insolence; I informed him that I was ready to give him all the satisfaction he desired, but that I should begin by accusing him publicly. At the same time I offered the marquis satisfaction on the same conditions on my friend's behalf. Leoni's impudence was disconcerted. His companions convinced him that he was lost if he resisted. He yielded, not without much remonstrance and bad temper, and they both left the house without returning to the salon. The marquis started the next day for Geneva, Leoni for Brussels.

"I was left alone with Zanini in his room; I told him

of my suspicions of him and of my purpose to denounce him to the princess. As I had no absolute proofs against him, he was less humble and suppliant than the marquis; but I saw that he was no less frightened. He exerted all the resources of his intelligence in appealing to my good nature and my discretion. I made him confess, however, that he was aware of his pupil's knavery to a certain point, and I forced him to tell me his story. In that respect, Zanini lacked prudence; he should have maintained obstinately that he knew nothing of it; but my stern threats to unmask the guests he had introduced made him lose his head. I left him, thoroughly convinced that he was a rascal, as cowardly, but more circumspect than the other two. I kept the secret in my own interest. I was afraid that the influence he had acquired over the Princesse de X—— would be stronger than my honorable character, that he would be clever enough to persuade her to regard me as an impostor or a fool, and would make my conduct appear ridiculous. I was sick of the filthy business. I thought no more about it and left Paris three months later. You know who was the first person my eyes sought as I entered Delpech's ball-room. I was still in love with you, and, having reached Brussels only an hour earlier, I did not know that you were to be married. I discovered you in the midst of the crowd; I walked toward you and saw Leoni at your side. I thought that I was dreaming, that I was deceived by a resemblance. I made inquiries and discovered beyond question that your fiancé was the knight of industry who had stolen three or four hundred louis from me. I did not hope to supplant him, indeed I think that I did not wish to. To succeed such a man in your heart, perhaps to wipe from your cheeks the marks of his kisses; that was a thought that killed my love. But I swore that an

innocent girl and an honorable family should not be the dupes of a scoundrel. You know that our explanation was neither long nor diffuse; but your fatal passion defeated the effort that I made to save you."

Henryet paused. I hung my head, I was overwhelmed; it seemed to me that I could never again look anybody in the face. Henryet continued:

"Leoni avoided trouble very skilfully by carrying off his fiancée from before my eyes, that is to say, a million francs in diamonds which she had upon her person. He concealed you and your jewels, I don't know where. Amid all the tears shed over his daughter's fate, your father shed a few for his beautiful gems so beautifully mounted. One day he artlessly observed in my presence that the thing that grieved him most in regard to the theft was that the diamonds would be sold for half their value to some Jew, and that the beautiful settings, with all their artistic workmanship, would be broken up and melted by the receiver, to avoid compromising himself. 'It was hardly worth while to do such work!' he said, weeping; 'it was hardly worth while to have a daughter and love her so dearly!'

"It would seem that your father was right, for with the proceeds of his robbery Leoni found means to cut a swath at Venice for only three months. The palace of his fathers had been sold and was now to let. He hired it and replaced his name, so they say, on the cornice of the inner courtyard, not daring to place it over the main gateway. As he is actually known to be a swindler by very few people, his house became once more the rendezvous of many honorable men, who doubtless were fleeced there by his confederates. But it may be that his fear of being detected deterred him from joining them, for he was speedily ruined anew. He contented himself, I pre-

sume, with winking at the brigandage those villains committed in his house; he is at their mercy and would not dare to get rid of those whom he detests most bitterly. Now he is, as you know, the Princess Zagarolo's titular lover: that lady, who has been very beautiful, is now, faded and doomed to die very soon of a disease of the lungs. It is supposed that she will leave all her property to Leoni, who pretends to be violently in love with her, and whom she loves passionately. He is waiting for her to make her will. Then you will be rich, Juliette. He has probably told you so; have patience a little longer and you will take the princess's box at the play, you will drive in her carriages, on which you will simply change the bearings; you will embrace your lover in the magnificent bed in which she will have died, you will even wear her gowns and diamonds."

It may be that the pitiless Henryet said more than this, but I heard no more; I fell to the ground in terrible convulsions.

XVII

When I came to myself, I was alone with Leoni. I was lying on a sofa. He was looking at me fondly and anxiously.

"Dear heart," he said, when he saw that I was recovering the use of my faculties, "tell me what has happened! Why did I find you in such a terrible condition? Where are you in pain? What new grief have you had?"

"None," I replied, and I spoke the truth, for at that moment I remembered nothing.

"You are deceiving me, Juliette; some one has distressed you. The servant who was with you when I came home told me that a man came to see you this morning, that he remained with you a long while, and that when he went out he told them to come and look after you. Who was this man, Juliette?"

I had never lied in my life; it was impossible for me to reply. I did not wish to mention Henryet's name. Leoni frowned.

"A mystery!" he said; "a mystery between us! I would never have believed you capable of it. But you know no one here! Can it be that——? If it were he, there is not blood enough in his veins to wash away his insolence! Tell me the truth, Juliette, has Chalm been here to see you? Has he persecuted you again with his vile proposals and his calumnies against me?"

"Chalm!" I exclaimed. "Is he in Milan?" And I felt a thrill of terror which must have been reflected on my face, for Leoni saw that I was ignorant of the viscount's arrival.

"If it was not he," he said to himself, "who can this caller have been, who was closeted three hours with my wife and left her in a swoon? The marquis has been with me all day."

"O heaven!" I cried, "are all your detestable associates here? In heaven's name, see that they do not find out where I live and that I do not see them."

"But who is the man you do see, and to whom you do not deny admission to your bedroom?" said Leoni, becoming more and more thoughtful and pale. "Answer me, Juliette; I insist upon it. Do you hear?"

I realized how horrible my position was becoming. I

clasped my hands, trembling, and appealed to heaven in silence.

"You do not answer," said Leoni. "Poor woman! you have little presence of mind. You have a lover, Juliette! You are not to be blamed for it, as I have a mistress. I am a fool not to be able to bear it when you are satisfied with a part of my heart and my bed. But it is certain that I cannot be so generous."

He took his hat and put on his gloves with convulsive coldness, took out his purse, placed it on the mantel, and, without another word to me—without glancing at me—left the room. I heard him walk away with an even step and descend the stairs slowly.

Surprise, dismay and fear had frozen my blood. I thought that I was going mad; I put my handkerchief in my mouth to stifle my shrieks, and then, succumbing to fatigue, fell back upon the bed in the stupor of utter prostration.

In the middle of the night I heard sounds in the room. I opened my eyes and saw, without understanding what I saw, Leoni pacing the floor in intense agitation, and the marquis seated at a table, emptying a bottle of brandy. I did not stir. I had no thought of trying to find out what they were doing there; but little by little their words, falling upon my ears, found their way to my understanding and assumed a meaning.

"I tell you that I saw him, and I am sure of it," said the marquis. "He is here."

"The infernal hound!" replied Leoni, stamping on the floor. "Would to God the earth would open and rid me of him."

"Well said!" rejoined the marquis. "That's my idea."

"He comes to my very room to torment that unfortunate woman!"

"Are you sure, Leoni, that she is not glad to have him come?"

"Hold your tongue, viper! and don't try to make me suspect that poor creature. She has nothing left in the world but my esteem."

"And Monsieur Henryet's love," added the marquis.

Leoni clenched his fists. "We will rid her of that love!" he cried, "and cure the Fleming of it."

"The devil! Leoni, don't do anything foolish!"

"And you, Lorenzo, don't you do anything vile!"

"You would call that vile, would you? We have very different ideas. You escort La Zagarolo quietly to the grave, in order to inherit her worldly goods, and you do not approve of my putting an enemy underground whose existence paralyzes ours forever! It seems to you very innocent, notwithstanding the prohibition of the physicians, to hasten by your generous fondness the end of your dear consumptive's sufferings——"

"Go to the devil! If that madwoman wants to live fast and die soon, why should I prevent her? She is attractive enough to command my obedience, and I am not fond enough of her to resist her."

"What a ghastly thing!" I muttered in spite of myself, and fell back on my pillow.

"Your wife spoke, I think," said the marquis.

"She is dreaming," Leoni replied; "she has the fever."

"Are you sure that she isn't listening?"

"In the first place she would need to have strength to listen. She is very sick, too, poor Juliette! She doesn't complain; she suffers all by herself! She has not twenty women to wait on her; she doesn't pay courtiers to satisfy her sickly fancies; she is dying piously and chastely, like an expiatory victim, between heaven and me."

Leoni sat down at the table and burst into tears.

"This is the effect of brandy," said the marquis, calmly, putting the glass to his lips. "I warned you; it always takes hold of the nerves."

"Let me alone, brute beast!" shouted Leoni, giving the table a push which nearly overturned it on the marquis; "let me weep in peace. You don't know what love is!"

"Love!" said the marquis in a theatrical tone, mimicking Leoni; "remorse! those are very sonorous and dramatic words. When do you send Juliette to the hospital?"

"That is right," said Leoni, with a gloomy, despairing air, "talk to me that way, I prefer it. That suits me, I am capable of anything. To the hospital! yes. She was so lovely, so dazzlingly beautiful! I came, and see what I have brought her to! Ah! I could tear out my hair!"

"Well," said the marquis after a pause, "have we had enough sentiment for to-day? God! it has been a long attack. Now let us reason a little; you don't seriously mean to fight with Henryet?"

"Most seriously," replied Leoni; "you talk seriously enough about murdering him."

"That's a very different matter."

"It is precisely the same thing. He doesn't know how to use any weapon, and I am very expert with all sorts."

"Except the stiletto," said the marquis, "or the pistol at point-blank range; besides, you don't kill anybody but women."

"I will kill that man at all events," replied Leoni.

"And you think he will consent to fight with you?"

"He will; he is brave enough."

"But he isn't mad. He will begin by having us arrested as a couple of thieves."

"He will begin by giving me satisfaction. I will force him to do it, I will strike him in the theatre."

"He will return it by calling you forger, blackleg, card-sharper."

"He will have to prove it. He is not known here, whereas we are fairly established here on a brilliant footing. I will call him a lunatic and visionary; and when I have killed him, everybody will think I was right."

"You are mad, my dear fellow," replied the marquis; "Henryet is recommended to the richest merchants in Italy. His family is well known and bears a high reputation in commercial circles. He himself doubtless has friends in the city, or at all events acquaintances, with whom his statements will carry weight. He will fight to-morrow night, let us say. Very good! during the day he will have had time enough to tell twenty people that he is going to fight with you because he caught you cheating, and that you took it ill of him that he should try to prevent you."

"Very well! he may say it and people may believe it if they choose, but I will kill him."

"La Zagarolo will turn you out-of-doors and destroy her will. All the nobles will close their doors to you, and the police will request you to go to play the lover in some other country."

"Very well! I will go somewhere else. The rest of the world will belong to me when I am well rid of that man."

"Yes, and from his blood will sprout a pretty little nursery of accusers. Instead of Monsieur Henryet, you will have the whole city of Milan at your heels."

"O heaven! what shall I do?" said Leoni, in sore perplexity.

"Make an appointment with him in your wife's name, and cool his blood with a good hunting-knife. Give me that scrap of paper yonder and I'll write to him."

Leoni, paying no heed, opened a window and fell into a reverie, while the marquis wrote. When he had finished he called him.

"Listen to this, Leoni," he said, "and see whether I know how to write a *billet-doux:*

"'My friend; I cannot receive you again in my room; Leoni knows all and threatens me with the most horrible consequences; take me away or I am lost. Take me to my mother or put me in a convent; do with me as you please, but rescue me from my present horrible plight. Be in front of the main door of the cathedral at one o'clock to-morrow morning, and we will make arrangements for our departure. It will be easy for me to meet you, as Leoni passes every night at La Zagarolo's. Do not be surprised by this extraordinary and almost illegible handwriting: Leoni, in a fit of anger, almost crushed my right hand.

"'JULIETTE RUYTER.'

"It seems to me that that letter is very judiciously expressed," said the marquis, "and that it will seem plausible enough to the Fleming, whatever the degree of intimacy between him and your wife. The words which she fancied that she was saying to him at times in her delirium make it certain that he offered to take her back to her own country. The writing is horrible, and whether he is familiar with Juliette's or not——"

"Let me see it," said Leoni, leaning over the table with an air of interest.

His face wore a horrifying expression of doubt and longing to be persuaded. I saw no more. My brain was exhausted, my thoughts became confused. I relapsed into a sort of lethargy.

XVIII

When I came to myself the flickering lamplight fell upon the same objects. I raised myself cautiously and saw the marquis just where he was when I lost consciousness. It was still dark. There were still bottles on the table, as well as a writing-desk and something which I could not see very plainly, but which resembled a weapon. Leoni was standing in the middle of the room. I tried to recall their previous conversation. I hoped that the ghastly fragments of it which recurred to my memory were merely the dreams of fever, and I had no idea at first that twenty-four hours had elapsed between that conversation and the one just beginning. The first words that I understood were these:

"He must have suspected something for he was armed to the teeth."

As he spoke, Leoni wiped his bleeding hand with his handkerchief.

"Bah! yours is nothing but a scratch," said the marquis; "I have a more severe wound in the leg; and yet I must dance at the ball to-morrow, so that no one may suspect anything. So stop fussing over your hand, wrap it up and think of something else."

"It is impossible for me to think of anything but that

blood. It seems to me that I see a lake of it all about me."

"Your nerves are too delicate, Leoni; you are good for nothing."

"*Canaille!*" exclaimed Leoni in a tone of hatred and contempt, "but for me you would be a dead man; you retreated like a coward, and you would have been struck from behind. If I had not seen that you were lost, and if your ruin would not have involved mine, I would never have touched that man at such an hour and in such a place. But your infernal obstinacy compelled me to be your accomplice. All that I needed was to commit a murder, to be worthy of your society."

"Don't play the modest man," retorted the marquis; "when you saw that he defended himself, you became a very tiger."

"Ah! yes, it rejoiced my heart to have him die defending himself; for after all I killed him fairly."

"Very fairly; he had postponed the game till the next day, and as you were in a hurry to be done with it, you killed him on the spot."

"Whose fault was it, traitor? Why did you throw yourself on him just as we were separating after we had agreed to meet the next day? Why did you run when you saw that he was armed, and thus compel me to defend you or else be denounced by him to-morrow for having conspired with you to lure him into a trap and murder him? Now I have made myself liable to the scaffold, and yet I am not a murderer. I fought with equal weapons, equal chance, equal courage."

"Yes, he defended himself like a man," said the marquis; "you both performed prodigies of valor. It was a very fine spectacle to see, truly Homeric, was that duel

with knives. But I am bound to say that for a Venetian you handle that weapon wretchedly."

"It is quite true that it isn't the weapon I am in the habit of using, and by the way I am inclined to think it would be wise to conceal or destroy this one."

"That would be the height of folly, my friend! You must keep it; your servants and friends know that you always carry such a weapon; if you should dispose of it, that would be an indication of guilt."

"True, but yours?"

"Mine is innocent of his blood; my first blows missed, and after that yours left me no room."

"Ah! heaven! that is true too. You tried to murder him, and fatality compelled me to do with my own hands the deed of which I had such a horror."

"It pleases you to say that, my dear fellow; however, you went very willingly to the rendezvous."

"I had an instinctive foreboding that my evil genius would force me to do it. After all, it was my destiny and his. We are rid of him at last! But why in the devil did you empty his pockets?"

"Precaution and presence of mind on my part. When they find him stripped of his money and his wallet, they will look for the assassin among the lowest classes, and will never suspect people in fashionable society. It will be considered an act of brigandage and not a matter of private revenge. Don't betray yourself by absurd emotion when you hear the affair mentioned to-morrow, and we have nothing to fear. Just reach me the candle so that I can burn these papers; as for honest coin, that never betrayed anybody."

"Stop!" said Leoni, seizing a letter which the marquis was about to burn with the rest. "I saw Juliette's family name."

"It is a letter to Madame Ruyter," said the marquis. "Let us see:"

"'MADAME,

"'If it is not too late, if you did not start at once on receiving the letter I wrote yesterday summoning you to your daughter, do not start. Wait at home for her or come to meet her as far as Strasbourg; I will send for you when we reach there. I shall be there with Mademoiselle Ruyter in a few days. She has decided to fly from her seducer's dishonor and ill treatment. I have just received a note in which she announces this determination. I am to see her to-night to agree upon the time of our departure. I will leave all my business in order to make the most of her present disposition, in which her lover's flatteries may not leave her forever. The empire that he has over her is still immense. I fear that her passion for that wretch is eternal, and that her regret for having left him will make you both shed many tears hereafter. Be indulgent and kind to her; that is your proper rôle as her mother, and you can easily play it. For my part, I am rough-mannered, and my indignation finds expression more readily than my compassion. I wish I were more persuasive; but I cannot be more lovable, and it is my destiny not to be loved.

"'PAUL HENRYET.'

"This proves to you, O my friend!" said the marquis in a mocking tone, as he held the letter in the flame of the candle, "that your wife is faithful and that you are the most fortunate of husbands."

"Poor woman!" said Leoni, "and poor Henryet! He would have made her happy! He would at least have respected and honored her! In God's name, what fatal-

ity drove her into the arms of a wretched adventurer, drawn to her by destiny from one end of the world to the other, when she had an honorable man's heart at her very hand. Blind child! why did you choose me?"

"Charming!" said the marquis ironically. "I hope you will write some verses on this subject. A pretty epitaph for the man you massacred to-night would be, to my mind, in exceedingly good taste and altogether new."

"Yes, I will write one for him," retorted Leoni, "and it will run like this:

"'Here lies an honest man who tried to defend human justice against two scoundrels, and whom divine justice allowed them to murder.'"

Thereupon, Leoni fell into a sorrowful reverie, during which he constantly muttered his victim's name:

"Paul Henryet!" he said. "Twenty-two years old, twenty-four at most. A cold but handsome face. A rigid, upright character. Hatred of injustice. The uncompromising pride of honesty, and withal something tender and melancholy. He loved Juliette, he has always loved her. He fought against his passion to no purpose. I see by that letter that he loved her still, and that he would have worshipped her if he could have cured her. Juliette, Juliette! you might still have been happy with him, and I have killed him! I have robbed you of the man who might have comforted you; your only defender is no more, and you remain the victim of a bandit."

"Very fine!" said the marquis; "I wish that you might never move your lips without having a stenographer beside you to preserve all the noble and affecting things you say. For my part, I am going to bed. Good-night, my dear fellow; go to bed to your wife, but change your shirt first; for, deuce take me! you have Henryet's blood on your frill!"

The marquis left the room. Leoni, after a moment's irresolution, came to my bed, raised the curtain and looked at me. He saw that I was only drowsing under my bedclothes, and that my eyes were open and fixed upon him. He could not endure my livid face and fixed stare; he fell back with a cry of horror, and I called him several times in a weak, broken voice: "Murderer! murderer! murderer!"

He fell on his knees as if struck by lightning, and dragged himself to my bed with an imploring air.

"Go to bed to your wife," I said, repeating the marquis's words in a sort of delirium; "but change your shirt, for you have Henryet's blood on your frill!"

Leoni fell face downward on the floor, uttering inarticulate cries. I lost my reason altogether, and it seemed to me that I repeated his cries, imitating with dazed servility the tone of his voice and the contortions of his body. He thought that I was mad, and, springing to his feet in terror, came to my side. I thought that he was going to kill me; I threw myself out of bed, crying: "Mercy! mercy! I won't tell!" and I fainted just as he seized me, to lift me up and assist me.

XIX

I awoke, still in his arms, and he had never put forth so much eloquence, so much affection, so many tears, to implore his pardon. He confessed that he was the lowest of men; but, he said, there was one thing, and only one, that raised him somewhat in his eyes, and that was

the love he had always had for me, and which none of his vices, none of his crimes had had the power to stifle. Hitherto he had fought against the appearances which accused him on all sides. He had struggled against overwhelming evidence in order to retain my esteem. Thenceforth, being no longer able to justify himself by falsehood, he took a different course and assumed a new rôle, in order to move me and conquer me. He laid aside all artifice—perhaps I should say all sense of shame—and confessed all the villainy of his life. But amid all that filth he forced me to distinguish and to understand what there was in his character that was truly noble, the faculty of loving, the everlasting vigor of a heart in which the most exhausting weariness, the most dangerous trials, did not extinguish the sacred flame.

"My conduct is base," he said to me, "but my heart is still noble. It still bleeds for its crimes; it has retained, in all the vigor of its first youth, the sentiment of justice and injustice, horror of the evil it does, enthusiastic admiration of the good it beholds. Your patience, your virtues, your angelic kindliness, your pity, as inexhaustible as God's, can never be displayed in favor of a being who appreciates them better or admires them more. A man of regular morals and sensitive conscience would consider them more natural and would appreciate them less. With such a man you would be simply a virtuous woman; while with a man like me you are a sublime woman, and the debt of gratitude which is piling up in my heart is as great as your sacrifices and your sufferings. Ah! it is something to be loved and to be entitled to a boundless passion, and from what other man have you so good a right to claim such a passion as from me? For whom would you subject yourself again to the tortures and the despair you have undergone? Do you

think there is anything else in life but love? For my part, I do not. And do you think that it is a simple matter to inspire it and to feel it? Thousands of men die incomplete, having never known any other love than that of the beasts. Often a heart capable of loving seeks in vain where to bestow its love, and comes forth pure of all earthly passions, perhaps to find a place in heaven. Ah! when God vouchsafes to us on earth that profound, passionate, ineffable sentiment, we must no longer desire or hope for paradise, Juliette; for paradise is the blending of two hearts in a kiss of love. And when we have found it here on earth, what matters it whether it be in the arms of a saint or of one of the damned? What matters it whether the man you love be accursed or adored among men, so long as he returns your love? Is it I whom you love, or is it this noise that is going on about me? What did you love in me at the outset? Was it the splendor that encompassed me? If you hate me today, I must needs doubt your past love; I must needs see in you, instead of that angel, that devoted victim whose blood, shed for me, falls ceaselessly drop by drop upon my lips, only a poor, weak, credulous girl, who loved me from vanity and deserted me from selfishness. Juliette, Juliette, think of what you will do if you leave me! You will ruin the only friend who knows you, appreciates and respects you, for a society which despises you now and whose esteem you will never recover. You have nothing left but me in the whole world, my poor child. You must either cling to the adventurer's fortunes or die forgotten in a convent. If you leave me, you are no less insane than cruel; you will have had all your misery, all your sufferings, and you will not reap their fruit; for now, if, notwithstanding all that you know, you can still love me and stay with me, be sure

that I will love you with a love of which you have no conception, and which I never should have dreamed of as possible if I had married you honestly and lived with you peacefully in the bosom of your family. Hitherto, despite all you have sacrificed, all you have suffered, I have not loved you as I feel that I am capable of loving. You have never yet loved me as I am; you have cherished an attachment for a false Leoni, in whom you still saw some grandeur and some fascination. You hoped that he would become some day the man you loved in the beginning; you did not believe that you had held in your arms a man who was irrevocably lost. And I said to myself: 'She loves me conditionally; it is not I whom she loves as yet, but the character I am acting. When she sees my features under my mask, she will cover her eyes and fly; she will look with horror on the lover whom now she presses to her bosom. No, she is not the wife and mistress I had dreamed of, and for whom my ardent heart is calling with all its strength. Juliette is still a part of that society whose foe I am; she will be my foe when she knows me. I cannot confide in her; I cannot pour out upon the bosom of any living being the most execrable of my sufferings, my shame for what I am doing every day. I suffer, I am heaping up remorse in my soul. If only there were a woman capable of loving me without asking me to change—if I could have a friend who would not be an accuser and a judge!'—That is what I thought, Juliette. I prayed to heaven for that friend, but I prayed that it might be you and no other; for you were already what I loved best on earth before. I realized all that there still remained for us both to do before loving each other really."

What could I reply to such speeches? I looked at him with a stupefied air. I was amazed that I still considered

him handsome and lovable; that I still felt in his presence the same emotion, the same desire for his caresses, the same gratitude for his love. His degradation left no trace on his noble brow; and when his great black eyes flashed their flame upon mine, I was dazzled, intoxicated as always; all his blemishes disappeared, everything was blotted out, even the stains of Henryet's blood. I forgot everything else to bind myself to him by blind vows, by oaths and insane embraces. Then in very truth his love was rekindled or rather renewed, as he had prophesied. He gradually abandoned the Princess Zagarolo and passed all the time of my convalescence at my feet, with the same loving attentions and the delicate tokens of affection which had made me so happy in Switzerland; I can say, indeed, that these proofs of affection were even more ardent and caused me more pride, that that was the happiest period of my whole life, and that Leoni was never dearer to me. I was convinced of the truth of all that he had told me; nor could I fear that he clung to me from self-interest, as I had nothing more in the world to give him, and was thenceforth a burden to him and dependent upon the hazards of his fortunes. However I felt a sort of pride in not falling short of what he expected from my generosity, and his gratitude seemed to me greater than my sacrifices.

One evening he came home in a state of great excitement, and said, pressing me to his heart again and again:

"My Juliette, my sister, my wife, my angel, you must be as kind and indulgent as God himself, you must give me a fresh proof of your adorable sweetness and your heroism; you must come and live with me at the Princess Zagarolo's."

I recoiled, surprised beyond words; and, as I realized that it was no longer in my power to deny him anything,

I turned pale and began to tremble like a condemned man at the gallows' foot.

"Listen," he said, "the princess is horribly ill. I have neglected her on your account; she has grieved so that her disease has become seriously aggravated and the doctors give her only a month to live. Since you know everything, I can speak to you about that infernal will. It is a matter of several millions, and I am in competition with a family on the alert to take advantage of my mistakes and turn me out at the decisive moment. The will in my favor is in existence, in proper form, but a moment's anger may destroy it. We are ruined, we have no other resource. You will have to go to the hospital and I become a leader of brigands, if it escapes us."

"O *mon Dieu!*" I said, "we lived so inexpensively in Switzerland! Why is wealth a necessity to us? Now that we love each other so well, can we not live happily without committing any new villainy?"

He answered by a frown which expressed the disappointment, the annoyance and the dread which my reproaches caused him. I said nothing more in that connection, but asked him wherein I was necessary to the success of his enterprise.

"Because the princess, in a fit of jealousy not without some foundation, has demanded to see you and question you. My enemies have taken pains to inform her that I pass all my mornings with a young and pretty woman who came to Milan after me. For a long time I succeeded in making her believe that you were my sister; but, during this month that I have neglected her altogether, she has conceived doubts, and refuses to believe in your illness, which I alleged as an excuse for my neglect.—'If your sister is sick too, and can't do without you,' she said, 'have her brought to my house; my women and

my doctors will take care of her. You can see her at any time; and if she is really your sister, I will love her as if she were my sister too.'—I tried in vain to fight against this strange whim. I told her that you were very poor and very proud, that nothing in the world would induce you to accept her hospitality, and that it would, in fact, be exceedingly unseemly and indelicate for you to come to live in the house of your brother's mistress. She would listen to no excuse and replied to all my objections with: 'I see that you are deceiving me; she is not your sister.'—If you refuse, we are lost. Come, come, come; I implore you, my child, come!"

I took my hat and shawl without replying. While I was dressing, tears rolled slowly down my cheeks. As we left my chamber, Leoni wiped them away with his lips and embraced me again and again, calling me his benefactress, his guardian angel and his only friend.

I passed with trembling limbs through the princess's vast apartments. When I saw the magnificence of the house, I had an indescribable feeling of oppression at my heart, and I remembered Henryet's harsh words: "When she is dead, you will be rich, Juliette; you will inherit her splendor, you will sleep in her bed and you can wear her gowns."—I hung my head as I passed the servants; it seemed to me that they glared at me with hatred and envy; and I felt far beneath them. Leoni pressed my arm in his, feeling my body tremble and my legs give way.

"Courage! courage!" he whispered to me.

We reached the bedroom at last. The princess was lying in an invalid's chair and seemed to be awaiting us impatiently. She was a woman of about thirty years, very thin, with a yellow face, and magnificently dressed, although *en dēshabillē*. She must have been very beau-

tiful in her early days, and she still had a charming face. The thinness of her cheeks exaggerated the size of her eyes, the whites of which, vitrified by consumption, resembled mother of pearl. Her fine, smooth hair was of a glistening black and seemed dry and sickly like her whole person. When she saw me, she uttered a faint exclamation of joy and held out a long, tapering hand, of a bluish tinge, which I fancy that I can see at this moment. I understood, by a glance from Leoni, that I was expected to kiss that hand, and I resigned myself to the necessity.

Leoni was undoubtedly ill at ease, and yet his self-possession and the tranquillity of his manners confounded me. He spoke of me to his mistress as if there were no possibility of her discovering his knavery, and expressed his affection for her before me, as if it were impossible for me to feel any grief or anger. The princess seemed to have fits of distrust from time to time, and I could see, by her glances and her words, that she was studying me in order to destroy her suspicions or confirm them. As my natural mildness of disposition made it impossible for her to hate me, she soon began to have confidence in me; and, jealous as she was, to the point of frenzy, she thought that it was impossible for any woman to consent to take the part I was playing. An adventuress might have done it, but my manners and my face gave the lie to any such conjecture as to my character. The princess became passionately fond of me. She would hardly allow me to leave her bedroom, she overwhelmed me with gifts and caresses. I was a little humiliated by her generosity and I longed to refuse her gifts; but the fear of displeasing Leoni made me endure this additional mortification. What I had to suffer during the first days, and the efforts that I made to bend my pride to that ex-

tent, are beyond belief. However, the suffering gradually became less keen, and my mental plight became endurable. Leoni manifested in secret a passionate gratitude and delirious fondness. The princess, despite her whims, her impatience, and all the torture that her love for Leoni caused me, became agreeable and almost dear to me. Her heart was ardent rather than loving, and her nature lavish rather than generous. But she had an irresistible charm of manner; the wit with which her language sparkled in the midst of her most intense agony, the ingeniously kind and caressing words with which she thanked me for my attentions or begged me to forget her outbreaks of temper, her little cajoleries, her shrewd observations, the coquetry which attended her to the grave; in short, everything about her had an originality, a nobility, a refinement by which I was the more deeply impressed because I had never seen a woman of her rank at close quarters, and was not accustomed to the great charm which they owe to their familiarity with the best society. She possessed that charm to such a degree that I could not resist it and allowed myself to be swayed by it at her pleasure; she was so coy and fascinating with Leoni that I imagined that he was really in love with her, and ended by becoming accustomed to see them kiss, and to listen to their insipid speeches without being revolted by them. Indeed, there were days when they were so charming and so witty that I really enjoyed listening to them; and Leoni found means to say such sweet things to me that I was happy even in my unspeakable degradation.

The ill-will which the servants and underlings displayed toward me at first was speedily allayed, thanks to the pains I took to turn over to them all the little gifts their mistress gave me. I even enjoyed the affection and

confidence of the nephews and cousins; a very pretty little niece, whom the princess obstinately refused to see, was smuggled into her presence by my assistance, and pleased her exceedingly. Thereupon, I begged her to allow me to give the child a pretty casket which she had forced upon me that morning; and this display of generosity led her to give the child a much more valuable present. Leoni, in whose greed there was nothing paltry or petty, was pleased to see this bounty bestowed on a poor orphan, and the other relations began to believe that they had nothing to fear from us, and that our friendship for the princess was purely noble and disinterested. The essays at tale-bearing against me ceased entirely, and for two months we led a very tranquil life. I was astonished to find that I was almost happy.

XX

The only thing that disturbed me seriously was the constant presence of the Marquis de ——. He had obtained an introduction to the princess, on what pretext I have no idea, and amused her by his caustic, ill-natured chatter. Then he would draw Leoni into another room and have long interviews with him, from which Leoni always came with a gloomy brow.

"I hate and despise Lorenzo," he often said to me; "he is the vilest cur I know; he is capable of anything."

Thereupon, I would urge him to break with him; but he always replied:

"It is impossible, Juliette; don't you know that when two rascals have acted together, they never fall out except to send each other to the scaffold?"

These ominous words sounded so strangely in that beautiful palace, amid the peaceful life we were leading, and almost within hearing of that gracious and trustful princess, that a shudder ran through my veins when I heard them.

Meanwhile, our dear invalid's suffering increased from day to day, and the moment soon came when she must inevitably give up the struggle. We saw that she was failing gradually; but she did not lose her presence of mind for an instant, nor cease her jests and her kind speeches.

"How sorry I am," she said to Leoni, "that Juliette is your sister! Now that I am going to the other world, I must renounce you. I can neither demand nor desire that you remain faithful to me after my death. Unfortunately, you are certain to make a fool of yourself and throw yourself at the head of some woman who is unworthy of you. I know nobody in the world but your sister who is good enough for you; she is an angel, and no one but you is worthy of her."

I could not resist this kindly flattery, and my affection for the princess became warmer and warmer as death slowly took her from us. I could not believe it possible that she would be taken away with all her faculties, all her tranquillity, and when we were all so happy together. I asked myself how we could possibly live without her, and I could not think of her great gilded armchair standing unoccupied, between Leoni and myself, without my eyes filling with tears.

One evening, when I was reading to her while Leoni sat on the carpet warming her feet in a muff, she re-

ceived a letter, read it through hastily, uttered a loud shriek and fainted. While I flew to her assistance, Leoni picked up the letter and ran his eye over it. Although the writing was disguised, he recognized the hand of the Vicomte de Chalm. It was a denunciation of me, with circumstantial details concerning my family, my abduction, my relations with Leoni; and, with all the rest, a mass of detestable falsehoods regarding my morals and my character.

At the shriek which the princess uttered, Lorenzo, who was always hovering about us like a bird of evil omen, entered the room, I know not how; and Leoni, taking him into a corner, showed him the viscount's letter. When they came back to us, the marquis was very calm, and had a mocking smile on his lips, as usual; while Leoni, intensely agitated, seemed to question him with his eyes as if to ask his advice.

The princess was still unconscious in my arms. The marquis shrugged his shoulders.

"Your wife is intolerably stupid," he said, so loud that I overheard him. "Her presence here now will have the worst possible effect. Send her away; tell her to go for help. I will take everything on myself."

"But what will you do?" said Leoni, in great anxiety.

"Never fear. I have had an expedient all ready for a long while; it's a paper that I always have about me. But send Juliette away."

Leoni asked me to call the servants. I obeyed, and laid the princess's head gently on a cushion. But just as I was passing through the door, some undefinable magnetic force stopped me and made me turn. I saw the marquis approach the invalid as if to assist her; but his face seemed so wicked and Leoni's so pale, that I was afraid to leave the dying woman alone with them.

Heaven knows what vague ideas passed through my brain. I hastened to the bed and, glancing at Leoni in terror, I said: "Beware! beware!"—"Of what?" he replied, with an air of amazement. In truth I did not know myself, and I was ashamed of the species of madness I had shown. The marquis's ironical air completed my discomfiture. I went out and returned a moment later with the princess's women and the physician. He found the princess suffering from a terrible nervous spasm, and said that we must try to make her swallow a spoonful of her sedative mixture at once. We tried in vain to force her teeth apart.

"Let the signora try it," said one of the women, pointing to me; "the princess won't take anything from anybody else, and never refuses what she gives her."

I did try, and the dying woman readily yielded. Through force of habit she pressed my hand feebly as she returned the spoon to me; then she violently threw up her arms, raised herself as if she were about to jump out of bed, and fell back dead on her pillow.

This sudden death made a terrible impression on me; I fainted and was carried from the room. I was ill several days, and, when I returned to life, Leoni informed me that I was thenceforth in my own house; that the will had been opened and found unassailable in every respect; that we were the possessors of a handsome fortune and a magnificent palace.

"I owe it all to you, Juliette," he said, "and, more than that, I owe it to you that I am able to think without shame or remorse of our friend's last moments. Your delicacy, your angelic goodness, encompassed them with attentions and lessened their melancholy. She died in your arms, that rival whom any other woman than you would have strangled; and you wept for her as if she

were your sister! You are good! too good, too good! Now enjoy the fruit of your courage; see how happy I am to be rich and to be able to surround you once more with all the luxury that you crave."

"Hush," I replied; "now is the time when I blush and suffer. So long as that woman was here, and I was sacrificing my love and my pride to her, I took comfort in the thought that I was really fond of her, and that I was sacrificing myself for her and for you. Now I see only what was base and detestable in my situation. How everybody must despise us!"

"You are greatly mistaken, my dear girl," said Leoni; "everybody bows down to us and honors us because we are rich."

But Leoni did not long enjoy his triumph. The heirs-at-law, who came from Rome furious against us, having learned the details of the princess's sudden demise, accused us of having hastened it by poison, and demanded that the body should be exhumed to ascertain the facts. That was done, and, at the first glance, the traces of a powerful poison were discovered.

"We are lost!" said Leoni, rushing into my room. "Ildegonda was poisoned, and we are accused of having done it. Who could have committed that abominable crime? We must not ask the question, for it was Satan with Lorenzo's face. That is how he serves us. He is safe, and we are in the hands of the law. Do you feel the courage to leap out of the window?"

"No," I said; "I am innocent; I fear nothing. If you are guilty, fly."

"I am not guilty, Juliette," he said, squeezing my arm fiercely. "Do not accuse me when I do not accuse myself. You know that I am not in the habit of sparing myself."

We were arrested and thrown into prison. The prosecution made much noise, but it was less protracted and its result less serious than people expected. Our innocence saved us. In face of such a horrible charge I recovered all the strength due to a pure conscience. My youth and my air of sincerity won the judges at the very beginning. I was speedily acquitted. Leoni's honor and life hung in the balance a little longer. But it was impossible, despite appearances, to find any proof against him, for he was not guilty. He was horror-stricken by the crime—his face and his answers said so plainly enough. He came forth purged of that accusation. All the servants were suspected. The marquis had disappeared, but he returned secretly the moment that we were discharged from prison, and presumed to order Leoni to divide the inheritance with him. He declared that we owed him everything; that, except for the audacity and prompt execution of his plan, the will would have been destroyed. Leoni made the most terrific threats, but the marquis was not frightened. He had the murder of Henryet as a weapon to hold Leoni in awe, and he had it in his power to ruin him utterly. Leoni, frantic with rage, resigned himself to the necessity of paying him a considerable sum.

We began at once to lead a life of wild dissipation and to display the most immeasurable magnificence: to ruin himself anew was with Leoni a matter of six short months. I saw without regret the disappearance of the wealth which I had acquired with shame and sorrow; but I was terrified for Leoni's sake at the near approach of poverty. I knew that he could not endure it, and that to escape from it, he would plunge into fresh misconduct and fresh dangers. Unfortunately it was impossible to induce him to practise self-restraint and prudence; he replied with

caresses or jests to my entreaties and warnings. He had fifteen English horses in his stable, his table was open to the whole city, and he had a troupe of musicians at his orders. But the principal cause of his ruin was the enormous sums he was compelled to give his former associates, to prevent them from swooping down upon him and making his house a den of thieves. He had induced them to agree not to ply their trade under his roof; and, to persuade them to leave the salon when his guests began to play cards, he was obliged to pay them a considerable sum every day. This intolerable servitude made him long sometimes to fly from the world and conceal himself with me in some peaceful retreat. But truth compels me to say that that prospect was even more appalling to him; for the affection he felt for me was not strong enough to fill his whole life. He was always kind to me, but, as at Venice, he neglected me to drink his fill of all the pleasures of wealth. He led the most dissolute life away from home, and kept several mistresses, whom he selected from a certain fashionable set, to whom he made magnificent presents, and whose society flattered his insatiable vanity. Base and sordid in the acquisition of wealth, he was superb in his prodigality. His fickle character changed with his fortune, and his love for me followed all its phases. In the agitation and suffering caused by his reverses, having nobody but me in all the world to pity him and love him, he returned to me with heartfelt joy; but in his pleasures he forgot me and sought keener delights elsewhere. I was aware of all his infidelities; whether from indolence, or indifference, or confidence in my unwearying forgiveness, he no longer took the trouble to conceal them from me; and when I reproved him for the indelicacy of such frankness, he reminded me of my conduct toward the Princess Zagarolo,

and asked me if my pity were already exhausted. Thus the past bound me irrevocably to patience and grief. The greatest injustice in Leoni's conduct was his apparent belief that I was ready to submit to all these sacrifices thenceforth, without pain, and that a woman could ever become accustomed to overcome her jealousy.

I received a letter from my mother, who had heard of me at last through Henryet, and who had fallen dangerously ill just as she was starting to join me. She implored me to go to take care of her, and promised to welcome me with gratitude and without reproaches. That letter was a thousand times too gentle and too kind. I bathed it with my tears; but, argue with myself as I would, it seemed to me not what it should be; it was so mild and humble in tone and expression as to be undignified. Must I say it?—it was not the pardon of a noble and loving mother, alas! but the appeal of a sick and bored woman. I started at once and found her dying. She blessed me, pardoned me and died in my arms, requesting me to see that she was buried in a certain dress of which she had been very fond.

XXI

So much fatigue of body and mind, so much suffering had almost exhausted my sensibility. I hardly wept for my mother; I shut myself up in her room after they had taken her body away, and there I remained, crushed and despondent, for several months, occupied solely in reviewing the past in all its phases, and never bethinking

myself to wonder what I should do in the future. My aunt, who had greeted me very coldly at first, was touched by this mute grief, which her character understood better than the more demonstrative form of tears. She looked after my welfare in silence, and saw to it that I did not allow myself to die of hunger. The melancholy aspect of that house, which I had known so cheerful and bright, was well adapted to my frame of mind. I saw the old furniture, which recalled the numberless trivial events of my childhood. I compared that time, when a scratch on my finger was the most terrible catastrophe that could disturb the tranquillity of my family, with the infamous and blood-stained life I had subsequently led. I saw, on the one hand, my mother at the ball, on the other, the Princess Zagarolo dying of poison in my arms, perhaps by my hand. The music of the violins echoed in my dreams amid the shrieks of the murdered Henryet; and, in the seclusion of the prison, where, during three months of agony, I had seemed to hear a sentence of death each day, I saw coming toward me, amid the glare of candles and the perfume of flowers, my own ghost clad in silver crêpe and covered with jewels. Sometimes, tired out by these confused and terrifying dreams, I walked to the window, raised the curtains and looked out upon that city where I had been so happy and so flattered, and on the trees of that promenade where so much admiration had followed my every step. But I soon noticed the insulting curiosity which my pale face aroused. People stopped under my window or stood in groups talking about me, almost pointing their fingers at me. Then I would step back, drop the curtains, sit down beside my mother's bed and remain there until my aunt came with her silent face and noiseless step, took my arm and led me to the table. Her manner toward me at that crisis of

my life, seemed to me most generous and most appropriate to my situation. I would not have listened to words of consolation, I could not have endured reproaches, I should not have put faith in marks of esteem. Silent affection and unobtrusive compassion made more impression on me. That dismal face, which moved noiselessly about me like a ghost, like a reminder of the past, was the only face that neither disturbed nor terrified me. Sometimes I took her dry hands and held them to my lips for several minutes, without giving vent to a sigh. She never replied to that caress, but stood patiently, and did not withdraw her hands from my kisses; that was much.

I no longer thought of Leoni except as a ghastly memory which I sought with all my strength to banish. The thought of returning to him made me shudder as the sight of an execution would have done. I had not energy enough remaining to love him or hate him. He did not write to me and I was hardly aware of it, I had counted so little on his letters. One day there came one which told me of new disasters. A will of the Princess Zagarolo had been found, bearing a later date than ours. One of her servants, in whom she had confidence, had had the will in his custody ever since the day of its date. She had made it at the time that Leoni had neglected her to take care of me, and she was doubtful as to our relationship. Afterward, when she became reconciled to us, she had intended to destroy it; but, as she was subject to innumerable whims, she had kept both wills, so that she might at any time decide which she would leave in force. Leoni knew where his was kept; but the existence of the other was known only to Vincenzo, the princess's man of confidence; and he was under instructions to burn it at a sign from her. She did not an-

ticipate, poor creature, such a sudden and violent death. Vincenzo, whom Leoni had laden with benefactions, and who was altogether devoted to him at that time, having moreover no knowledge of the princess's final intentions, kept the will without saying a word, and allowed us to produce ours. He might have enriched himself by threatening us or selling his secret to the heirs-at-law; but he was not a dishonest man nor a wicked one. He allowed us to enjoy the inheritance, demanding no higher wages than he had previously received. But, when I had left Leoni, he became dissatisfied; for Leoni was brutal with his servants, and I retained them in his service only by my indulgence. One day Leoni forgot himself so far as to strike the old man, who at once pulled the will from his pocket and told him that he was going to take it to the princess's cousins. Threats, entreaties, offers of money, all were powerless to appease his anger. The marquis appeared on the scene and attempted to obtain possession of the fatal paper by force; but Vincenzo, who was a remarkably powerful man for his years, knocked him down, struck him, threatened to throw Leoni through the window if he attacked him, and hurried away to publish the document that avenged him. Leoni was at once dispossessed, and ordered to restore all that he had expended of the property, that is to say, three fourths of it. As he was unable to comply, he tried to fly, but in vain. He was put into prison, and it was from the prison that he wrote to me, not all the details which I have given you and which I learned afterward, but a few words in which he depicted the horror of his position. If I did not go to his aid, he might languish all his life in the most horrible captivity, for he no longer had the means to procure the comforts with which we had been able to surround ourselves at the time of our former confinement.

His friends had abandoned him and perhaps were glad to be rid of him. He was absolutely without resources, in a damp cell, where he was already very ill with fever. His jewels, even his linen had been sold; he had almost nothing to protect him from the cold.

I started at once. As I had never intended to settle definitively in Brussels, and as naught but the indolence of grief had delayed me there for half a year, I had converted almost all of my inheritance into cash; I had often thought of using it to found a hospital for penitent girls, and to become a nun therein. At other times I had thought of depositing it in the Bank of France, and purchasing an inalienable annuity for Leoni, which would keep him from want and villainy forever. I should have retained for myself only a modest annuity, and have buried myself alone in the Swiss valley where the memory of my happiness would assist me to endure the horror of solitude. When I learned the new disaster that had befallen Leoni, I felt that my love and anxiety for him sprang into life, more intense than ever. I sent all my fortune to a banking house at Milan. I reserved only a sufficient amount to double the pension which my father had bequeathed to my aunt. That amount was represented, to her great satisfaction, by the house in which we lived and in which she had passed half of her life. I abandoned it to her and set out to join Leoni. She did not ask me where I was going; she knew only too well; she did not try to detain me, she did not thank me, she simply pressed my hand; but when I turned to look back, I saw rolling slowly down her wrinkled cheek the first tear I had ever known her to shed.

XXII

I found Leoni in a horrible condition, haggard, pale as death and almost mad. It was the first time that want and suffering had really taken hold of him. Hitherto he had simply seen his wealth vanish little by little, while seeking and finding means to replenish it. His disasters in that respect had been great; but card-sharping and chance had never left him long battling with the privations of poverty. His mental power had always remained intact, but it was overcome when physical strength abandoned him. I found him in a state of nervous excitement which resembled madness. I gave securities for his debt. It was easy for me to furnish proofs of my responsibility, for I had them upon me. So I entered his prison only to set him free. His joy was so intense that he could not endure it, and he had to be carried, unconscious, to a carriage.

I took him to Florence and surrounded him with all the comforts I could procure. When all his debts were paid, I had very little left. I devoted all my energies to making him forget the sufferings of his prison. His robust body was soon cured, but his mind remained diseased. The terrors of darkness and the agony of despair had made a profound impression upon that active, enterprising man, accustomed to the enioyments of wealth, or to the excitement of the adventurer's life. Inaction had shattered him. He had become subject to childish terrors, to terrible outbreaks of violence; he could not en-

dure the slightest annoyance; and the most horrible thing was that he vented his wrath on me for all the annoyances that I could not spare him. He had lost that will power which enabled him to face without fear the most precarious prospects for the future. He was terrified now at the thought of poverty and asked me every day what resources I should have when my present means were exhausted. I was appalled myself at the thought of the destitution which was impending. The time came at last. I began to paint pictures on screens, snuff-boxes and other small articles of Spa wood. When I had worked ten hours, my earnings amounted to eight or ten francs. That would have been enough for my needs; but for Leoni it was utter poverty. He longed for a hundred impossible things; he complained bitterly, savagely, because he was not richer. He often reproached me for having paid his debts and for not having fled with him and with my money too. To calm him, I was obliged to convince him that it would have been impossible for me to get him out of prison and commit that piece of rascality. He would stand at the windows and swear horribly at the rich people driving by in their carriages. He would point to his shabby clothes and say with an accent that I cannot possibly imitate: "*Can't* you help me to obtain a better coat? *Won't* you do it?" He finally told me so often that I could rescue him from his distress, and that it was cruel and selfish of me to leave him in that condition, that I thought that he was mad and no longer tried to argue with him on the subject. I held my peace whenever he recurred to it, and concealed my tears, which served only to irritate him. He thought that I understood his abominable hints and called my silence inhuman indifference and stupid obstinacy. Several times he struck me savagely and would have

killed me if some one had not come to my assistance. It is true that when these paroxysms had passed, he threw himself at my feet and implored me with tears in his eyes to forgive him. But I avoided these scenes of reconciliation as far as I could, for the emotion caused a fresh shock to his nerves and provoked a return of the outbreaks. At last this irritability ceased and gave place to a sort of dull, stupid despair which was even more horrible. He would gaze at me with a gloomy expression, and seemed to nourish a secret aversion for me and projects of revenge. Sometimes I woke in the middle of the night and saw him standing by my bed, his face wearing a sinister expression; at such times I thought that he meant to kill me, and I shrieked with fear. But he would simply shrug his shoulders and return to his bed with a stupid laugh.

In spite of everything I loved him still, not as he was, but because of what he had been and might become again. There were times when I had hopes that a blessed revolution was taking place in him, and that he would come forth from that crisis a new man, cleansed of all his evil inclinations. He seemed no longer to think of satisfying them, nor did he express regret or desire for anything whatsoever. I could not imagine the subject of the long meditations by which he seemed to be absorbed. Most of the time his eyes were fixed upon me with such a strange expression that I was afraid of him. I dared not speak to him, but I asked his forgiveness by imploring glances. Then I would imagine that his own glance melted and that his breast rose with an imperceptible sigh; he would turn his head away as if he wished to conceal or stifle his emotion, and would fall to musing again. At such times I flattered myself that he was engaged in making salutary reflections concerning the past,

and that he would soon open his heart to tell me that he had conceived a hatred of vice and a love of virtue.

My hopes grew fainter when the Marquis de —— reappeared on the scene. He never entered my apartments, because he knew the horror I had of him; but he would pass under the windows and call Leoni, or come to my door and knock in a peculiar way to let him know that he was there. Then Leoni would go out with him and remain away a long while. One day I saw them pass and repass several times; the Vicomte de Chalm was with them.

"Leoni is lost," I thought, "and I too; some fresh crime will soon be committed under my eyes."

That evening Leoni came home late; and, as he left his companions at the street door, I heard him say these words:

"But you can tell her that I am mad, absolutely mad; and that otherwise I would never have consented to it. She must know well enough that want has driven me mad."

I dared not ask him for any explanation, and I served his modest supper. He did not touch it but began to poke the fire nervously; then he asked me for ether, and, having taken a large dose, went to bed and seemed to sleep. I worked every evening as long as I could, until I was overcome by drowsiness and fatigue. That night I went to bed at midnight. I was hardly in bed when I heard a slight noise, and it seemed to me that Leoni was dressing to go out. I spoke to him and asked what he was doing.

"Nothing," he said, "I was just getting up to come to you; but I don't like your light, you know that it affects my nerves and gives me horrible pains in the head; put it out."

I obeyed.

"Have you done it?" he said. "Now go to bed again, I am coming to kiss you; wait a moment."

This mark of affection, which he had not bestowed upon me for several weeks, made my poor heart leap with joy and hope. I flattered myself that the revival of his affection would lead to the recovery of reason and conscience. I sat on the edge of my bed and awaited him with the utmost joy. He came and threw himself into my arms, which were wide open to receive him, and, embracing me passionately, threw me back upon my bed. But, at that instant, a feeling of distrust, due to the protection of heaven or the delicacy of my instinct, led me to pass my hand over the face of the man who was embracing me. Leoni had allowed his beard and moustaches to grow since he had been ill; I found a smooth, clean-shaven face. I gave a shriek and pushed him away with all my force.

"What is the matter?" said Leoni's voice.

"Have you shaved your beard," I said.

"As you see," he replied.

But I noticed that while his voice was speaking at my ear, another mouth was clinging to mine. I shook myself free with the strength which wrath and despair give, and, rushing to the other end of the room, hurriedly turned up the lamp, which I had lowered but had not put out. I saw Lord Edwards seated on the edge of the bed, bewildered and disconcerted,—I believe that he was drunk,—and Leoni coming toward me with a desperate look in his eyes.

"Wretch!" I cried.

"Juliette," he said, with haggard eyes and in a muffled voice, "yield if you love me. It is a question of rescuing me from this destitution, in which, as you see, I am eating my heart out. It is a question of life and reason

with me, as you know. My salvation will be the reward of your devotion; and, as for yourself, you will be rich and happy with a man who has loved you for a long while, and who considers no price too great to pay to obtain you. Consent, Juliette," he added under his breath, "or I will kill you when he has left the room."

Terror deprived me of all judgment. I jumped through the window at the risk of killing myself. Some soldiers who were passing picked me up and carried me into the house unconscious. When I came to myself, Leoni and his confederates had left the house. They declared that I had jumped from the window in the delirium of brain fever, while they had gone into another room to call for help. They had feigned the greatest consternation. Leoni had remained until the surgeon who attended me declared that I had broken no bones. Then he had gone out saying that he would return, but he had not been seen for two days. He did not return, and I never saw him again.

Here Juliette finished her narrative and fell back on her couch, overwhelmed with fatigue and sadness.

"It was then, my poor child," I said, "that I made your acquaintance. I was living in the same house. The story of your accident aroused my interest. Soon I learned that you were young and worthy of a serious attachment; that Leoni, after treating you with great brutality, had abandoned you when you were critically ill and in want. I desired to see you; you were delirious when I approached your bed. O, Juliette, how lovely you were, with your bare shoulders, your dishevelled hair, your lips burning with the fire of fever, and your face animated by the excitement of suffering! How lovely you still seemed to me when, prostrated by fa-

tigue, you fell back on your pillow, pale and drooping, like a white rose shedding its leaves in the hot sun of midday! I could not tear myself away from you. I felt a thrill of irresistible sympathy; I was impelled by such a deep interest as nobody had ever aroused in me. I sent for the leading physicians of the city; I procured for you all the comforts that you lacked. Poor deserted girl! I passed whole nights by your bedside, I saw your despair, I understood your love. I had never loved; it seemed to me that no woman was capable of returning the passion that I was capable of feeling. I sought a heart as fervent as mine. I distrusted all those that I put to the test, and I soon realized the prudence of my self-restraint when I saw the coldness and frivolity of the hearts of those women. Yours seemed to me the only one capable of understanding me. A woman who could love and suffer as you had done was the realization of all my dreams. I desired to obtain your affection, but without much hope of success. What gave me the presumption to try to console you was my absolute certainty that I loved you sincerely and generously. All that you said in your delirium taught me to know you just as well and thoroughly as our subsequent intimacy has done. I knew that you were a sublime creature from the prayers that you addressed to God, aloud, in a tone of which no words can describe the heart-rending purity. You prayed for forgiveness for Leoni, always forgiveness, never vengeance! You invoked the souls of your parents; you described to them breathlessly the misfortunes by which you had expiated your flight and their sorrow. Sometimes you took me for Leoni, and poured out crushing reproaches upon me; at other times you thought that you were with him in Switzerland, and you embraced me passionately. It would have been easy for me then to abuse your error,

and the love that was gaining headway in my breast made your frantic caresses a veritable torture. But I would have died rather than yield to my desires, and the villainy of Lord Edwards, of which you talked constantly, seems to me the most degrading infamy of which a man could be guilty. At last I had the good fortune to save your life and your reason, my dear Juliette. Since then I have suffered bitterly, and I have been very happy through you. I am a fool perhaps not to be content with the friendship and the possession of such a woman as you, but my love is insatiable. I long to be loved as Leoni was, and I torment you with that foolish ambition. I have not his eloquence and his fascinations, but I love you. I have not deceived you; I will never deceive you. It is time for your heart, so long shattered by fatigue, to find rest while sleeping on mine. Juliette! Juliette! when will you love me as you are capable of loving?"

"Now and forever," she replied. "You saved me, you cured me, and you love me. I was mad, I see it now, to love such a man. All this that I have told you has brought before my eyes anew a multitude of vile things. Now I feel nothing but horror for the past, and I do not mean to recur to it again. You have done well to let me tell it all to you. I am calm now, and I feel that I can never again love his memory. You are my friend; you are my savior, my brother and my lover."

"Say your husband too, Juliette, I implore you!"

"My husband, if you will," she said, embracing me with a fondness which she had never manifested so warmly, and which brought tears of joy and gratitude to my eyes.

XXIII

I awoke the next day so happy that I thought no more about leaving Venice. The weather was superb, the sun as mild as in spring. Fashionably dressed women thronged the quays and laughed at the jests of the maskers, who, half reclining on the rails of the bridges, teased the passers-by, and made impertinent and flattering remarks to the ugly and pretty women respectively. It was Mardi Gras; a sad anniversary for Juliette. I was anxious to distract her thoughts, so suggested that we should go out, and she agreed.

I looked proudly at her as she walked by my side. It is not the custom to offer one's arm to a lady in Venice, but simply to support her by grasping her elbow as you go up and down the white marble stairways which confront you whenever you cross a canal. Juliette was so graceful and lithe in all her movements that I took a childish delight in feeling her lean gently on my hand as we crossed the bridges. Everybody turned to look at her, and the women, who never take pleasure in another woman's beauty, observed with interest, at all events, the refinement of her dress and her bearing, which they would have been glad to copy. It seems to me that I can still see Juliette's costume and her graceful figure. She wore a gown of violet velvet with an ermine boa and small muff. Her white satin hat framed her face, which was still pale, but so exquisitely beautiful that, despite seven or eight years of fatigue and mental unhappiness,

no one thought her more than eighteen. She wore violet silk stockings, so transparent that one could see through them the alabaster whiteness of her flesh. When she had passed and her face could no longer be seen, people followed with their eyes her tiny feet, so rare in Italy. I was happy to have her thus admired; I told her so, and she smiled at me with a sweet, affectionate expression. God! how happy I was!

A gayly-decorated boat, filled with maskers and musicians, was coming along the Giudecca canal. I suggested to Juliette that we take a gondola and row near to it, to see the costumes. She assented. Several parties followed our example, and we soon found ourselves entangled in a group of gondolas and skiffs which, with ourselves, accompanied the decorated vessel and seemed to serve as an escort to it.

We heard the gondoliers say that the party of maskers was composed of the richest and most fashionable young men in Venice. They were, in truth, dressed with extreme magnificence; their costumes were very rich, and the boat was decorated with silken sails, streamers of silver gauze and Oriental rugs of very great beauty. They were dressed like the ancient Venetians whom Paul Veronese, by a happy anachronism, has introduced in several devotional pictures, notably in the magnificent *Nuptials*, which the Republic of Venice presented to Louis XIV., and which is now in the Musée at Paris. I noticed especially one man near the rail of the boat, dressed in a long robe of pale green silk, embroidered with long arabesques in gold and silver. He was standing, and playing on the guitar; his attitude was so noble, his tall figure so perfectly formed, that he seemed to have been made expressly to wear those rich garments. I called Juliette's attention to him; she looked up at him

mechanically, hardly seeing him, and answered: "Yes, yes, superb!" thinking of something else.

We continued to follow, and, being crowded by the other boats, touched the decorated vessel just where this man stood. Juliette was standing by my side and leaning against the awning of the gondola to avoid being thrown backward by the shocks we often received. Suddenly this man leaned toward Juliette as if to see her more distinctly, passed his guitar to his neighbor, tore off his black mask and turned toward us again. I saw his face, which was beautiful and noble, if ever human face was. Juliette did not see him. Thereupon he called her name in an undertone, and she started as if she had received an electric shock.

"Juliette!" he repeated in a louder voice.

"Leoni!" she cried, frantic with joy.

It is still like a dream to me. A mist passed before my eyes; I lost the sense of sight for a second, I believe. Juliette rushed forward, impulsively and with energy. Suddenly I saw her transported as if by magic to the other boat, into Leoni's arms; their lips met in a delirious kiss. The blood rushed to my brain, roared in my ears, covered my eyes with a thicker veil. I do not know what happened. I came to myself as I was entering the hotel. I was alone; Juliette had gone with Leoni.

I flew into a frenzy of passion, and for three hours I raved like an epileptic. Toward night I received a letter from Juliette, thus conceived:

"Forgive me, forgive me, Bustamente; I love you, I respect you and I bless you on my knees for your love and your benefactions. Do not hate me; you know that I do not belong to myself, that an invisible hand controls my actions and throws me against my will into that man's

arms. O my friend, forgive me and do not seek revenge. I love him, I cannot live without him. I cannot know that he exists without longing for him, I cannot see him pass without following him. I am his wife, you see, and he is my master; it is impossible for me to escape from his passion and his authority. You saw whether I was able to resist his summons. There was something like an electric current, a magnet, which lifted me up and drew me to his heart, and yet I was by your side, I had my hand in yours. Why did you not hold me back? you had not the power; your hand opened, your lips were powerless to call me back; you see that it is beyond our control. There is a hidden will, a magic power, which ordains and accomplishes these strange things. I cannot break the chain that binds me to Leoni, it is the fetter that couples galley-slaves, but it was God's hand that welded it.

"O my dear Aleo, do not curse me! I am at your feet. I implore you to let me be happy. If you knew how dearly he loves me still, with what joy he received me! what caresses, what words, what tears! I am as one drunk, I seem to be dreaming. I must forget his crime against me: he was mad. After deserting me, he reached Naples in such a state of mental alienation that he was confined in an insane asylum. I do not know by what miracle he was cured and discharged, nor to what lucky chance he owes it that he is now once more at the very pinnacle of wealth. But he is handsomer, more brilliant, more passionate than ever. Let me, oh! let me love him, though I am destined to be happy but a single day and to die to-morrow. Should not you forgive me for loving him so madly, you who have an equally blind and misplaced passion for me?

"Forgive me; I am mad; I know not what I am say-

ing nor what it is that I ask you. It is not to take me back and forgive me when he has abandoned me again; oh, no! I have too much pride, never fear. I feel that I no longer deserve you, that when I rushed into that boat I cut myself adrift from you forever, that I can never again look you in the face or touch your hand. Adieu then, Aleo! Yes, I am writing to bid you adieu, for I cannot part from you without telling you that my heart is already bleeding, and that it will break some day with regret and repentance. I tell you, you will be avenged! Calm yourself now, forgive, pity me, pray for me; be sure that I am no insensible ingrate who does not appreciate your character and her duty to you. I am only an unhappy creature whom fatality drives hither and thither, and who has not the power to stop. I turn my face to you and send you a thousand farewells, a thousand kisses, a thousand blessings. But the tempest envelopes me and carries me off. As I perish on the reefs on which it is certain to hurl me, I will repeat your name and invoke your intercession as an angel of forgiveness between God and me.

"JULIETTE."

This letter caused a fresh attack of frenzy; then I fell into despair; I sobbed like a child for several hours; and, succumbing to fatigue, I fell asleep in my chair, in that vast room where Juliette had told me her story the night before. I awoke more calm; I lighted the fire and paced the floor back and forth several times with slow and measured step.

As the day was breaking I fell asleep again: my mind was made up; I was calm. At nine o'clock I went and made inquiries throughout the city, trying to get information as to certain details which I needed to know

about. Nobody knew by what means Leoni had made his fortune; it was known simply that he was rich, extravagant and dissipated; all the men of fashion frequented his house, copied his dress and were his companions in debauchery. The Marquis de —— accompanied him everywhere and shared his opulence; both were in love with a famous courtesan, and, by virtue of a most extraordinary caprice, that woman refused their offers. Her resistance had so stimulated Leoni's desire that he had made her the most extravagant promises, and there was no folly into which she could not lead him.

I called at her house and had much trouble in obtaining an audience. I was admitted at last, and she received me with a haughty air, asking me what I wanted, in the tone of a person who is in a hurry to dismiss an importunate caller.

"I have come to ask a favor at your hands," I said. "You hate Leoni?"

"Yes, I hate him mortally."

"May I ask you why?"

"He seduced a young sister of mine at Friuli, a virtuous, saint-like child; she died in the hospital. I would like to eat Leoni's heart."

"Meanwhile, will you assist me to play a cruel practical joke on him?"

"Yes."

"Will you write to him and give him an assignation?"

"Yes, provided that I do not keep it."

"That is understood. Here is a sketch of the note you must write him:

"I know that you have found your wife again and that you love her. I did not want you yesterday, you seemed

too easy a conquest; to-day it seems to me that it will be interesting to make you unfaithful; moreover, I am anxious to know if your frantic desire to possess me makes you capable of everything, as you boast. I know that you are to give a concert on the water this evening; I will be in a gondola and will follow you. You know my gondolier, Cristofano; be near the rail of your boat and leap into my gondola as soon as you see it. I will keep you an hour, after which I shall have had enough of you forever, perhaps. I want none of your presents; I want only this proof of your love. This evening or never."

La Missana thought the note very singular in tone and copied it laughingly.

"What will you do with him when you have him in the gondola?"

"Set him ashore on the bank of the Lido and let him pass a long, cool night there."

"I would gladly kiss you to show my gratitude," said the courtesan; "but I have a lover whom I propose to love all the week. Adieu."

"You must place your gondolier at my orders," I said.

"To be sure; he is intelligent, discreet and strong; do with him as you will."

XXIV

I returned to the hotel and passed the rest of the day reflecting deeply upon what I was to do. Night came; Cristofano and the gondola were waiting under my window. I dressed myself like a gondolier; Leoni's boat

appeared, decorated with colored lanterns, which gleamed like gems, from the top of the masts to the end of every piece of rigging, and sending up rockets in all directions in the intervals between the bursts of music. I stood at the stern of the gondola, oar in hand; I rowed alongside. Leoni was by the rail, in the same costume as on the night before; Juliette was sitting among the musicians; she too wore a magnificent costume, but she was downcast and pensive, and seemed not to be thinking of him. Cristofano removed his hat and raised his lantern to the level of his face. Leoni recognized him and leaped into the gondola.

As soon as he was on board, Cristofano informed him that La Misana was awaiting him in another gondola near the public garden.

"What's that? why isn't she here?" he asked.

"*Non so,*" replied the gondolier indifferently, and he began to row. I seconded him vigorously, and in a few moments we had passed the public garden. We were surrounded by a dense mist. Leoni leaned forward several times and asked if we were not almost there. We continued to glide smoothly over the placid surface of the lagoon; the moon, pale and swathed in mist, whitened the atmosphere without lightening it. We passed like smugglers the line which cannot ordinarily be passed without a permit from the police, and did not pause until we reached the sandy bank of the Lido, far enough away to be in no danger of meeting a living being.

"Knaves!" cried our prisoner. "Where the devil have you taken me? Where are the stairways of the public gardens? Where is La Misana's gondola? *Ventre-Dieu!* We are on sand! You have gone astray in the mist, clowns that you are, and you have set me ashore at random——"

"No, signor," I said in Italian; "be kind enough to take ten steps with me and you will find the person you seek."

He followed me; whereupon Cristofano, in accordance with my orders, instantly rowed away with the gondola, and went to wait for me in the lagoon on the other side of the island.

"Will you stop, brigand?" cried Leoni, when we had walked along the beach for several minutes. "Do you wish me to freeze here? Where is your mistress? Where are you taking me?"

"Signor," I rejoined, turning and drawing from under my cape the objects I had brought, "allow me to light your path."

With that I produced my dark lantern, opened it, and hung it on one of the posts on the bank.

"What the devil are you doing there?" he said; "have I a madman to deal with? What does this mean?"

"It means," I said, taking the swords from beneath my cloak, "that you must fight with me."

"With you, you cur! I'll beat you as you deserve."

"One moment," I said, taking him by the collar with an energy which staggered him a little. "I am not what you think; I am noble as well as yourself. Moreover, I am an honest man and you are a scoundrel. Therefore I do you much honor by fighting with you."

It seemed to me that my adversary trembled and was inclined to run away. I pressed him more closely.

"What do you want of me?" he cried. "Damnation! who are you? I don't know you. Why have you brought me here? Do you mean to murder me? I have no money about me. Are you a thief?"

"No," I said, "there is no thief and murderer here but yourself, as you well know."

"Are you my enemy?"

"Yes, I am your enemy."

"What is your name?"

"That does not concern you; you will find out if you kill me."

"And what if I don't choose to kill you?" he cried, shrugging his shoulders and struggling to appear self-possessed.

"In that case you will allow me to kill you," I replied, "for I give you my word that one of us two is destined to remain here to-night."

"You are a villain," he cried, making frantic efforts to escape. "Help! help!"

"That is quite useless," I said; "the noise of the waves drowns your voice, and you are a long way from human help. Keep quiet, or I will strangle you. Don't lose your temper, but make the most of the chances of safety I give you. I propose to kill you, not murder you. You know what that means. Fight with me, and do not compel me to take advantage of my superior strength, which must be evident to you."

As I spoke, I shook him by the shoulders and made him bend like a reed, although he was a full head taller than I. He realized that he was at my mercy, and tried to argue with me.

"But, signor," he said, "if you are not mad, you must have some reason for fighting with me. What have I done to you?"

"It does not please me to tell you," I replied, "and you are a coward to ask for my reasons for revenge, when you should demand satisfaction of me."

"What for?" he rejoined. "I never saw you before. It is not light enough for me to distinguish your features, but I am sure that this is the first time that I ever heard your voice."

"Dastard, have you no cause to be revenged on a man who has made sport of you, who has procured an assignation to be given you in order to play a joke upon you, and who has brought you here against your will to insult you? I was told that you were brave. Must I strike you to arouse your courage?"

"You are an insolent scoundrel," he said, making an effort to work himself into a passion.

"Very good! I demand satisfaction for that remark, and I propose to take satisfaction at once with this blow."

I struck him lightly on the cheek. He uttered a roar of rage and fear.

"Have no fear," I said, holding him with one hand and giving him a sword with the other. "Defend yourself. I know that you are the first swordsman in Europe; I am far from being your equal. It is true that I am calm and you are frightened, which equalizes our chances."

Giving him no time to reply, I attacked him fiercely. The wretch threw his sword away and ran. I followed him, overtook him and shook him furiously. I threatened to throw him into the sea and drown him if he did not defend himself. When he saw that it was impossible for him to escape, he took the sword and mustered that desperate courage which love of life and unavoidable danger give to the most timid. But whether because the feeble light of the lantern did not allow him to measure his blows accurately, or because the fright he had experienced had taken away all his presence of mind, I found this terrible duellist pitifully weak. I was so determined not to slaughter him that I spared him a long while. At last he threw himself upon my sword, when trying to feint, and spitted himself up to the hilt.

"Justice! justice!" he said as he fell. "I am murdered!"

"You demand justice and you obtain it," I replied. "You die by my hand as Henryet died by yours."

He uttered a dull roar, bit the sand and gave up the ghost.

I took the two swords and started to find the gondola; but as I crossed the island I was seized with a thousand unfamiliar emotions. My strength suddenly failed me; I sat down upon one of those Hebraic tombs, half covered by the grass, which are ceaselessly beaten by the sharp salt winds from the Adriatic. The morn was beginning to come forth from the mist, and the white stones of that vast cemetery stood out against the dark verdure of the Lido. I reflected upon what I had done, and my revenge, from which I had anticipated so much joy, appeared to me in a most distressing light; I felt something like remorse, and yet I had thought that it was a legitimate and blessed act to purge the earth of that fiend incarnate and deliver Juliette from him. But I had not expected to find him a coward. I had hoped to meet a bold swordsman, and in attacking him I had thought that I was sacrificing my life. I was disturbed and almost appalled to have taken his life so easily. I did not find that my hatred was satisfied by vengeance, but I did feel that it was extinguished by contempt.—"When I found what a coward he was," I thought, "I should have spared him; I should have forgotten my resentment against him and my love for a woman capable of preferring such a man to me."

Thereupon confused, painful, agitated thoughts rushed into my brain. The cold, the darkness, the sight of those tombs calmed me at intervals; they plunged me into a dreamy stupor from which I awoke with a violent and painful shock when I suddenly remembered my situation, Juliette's despair, which would burst forth on the

morrow, and the aspect of that corpse lying on the blood-stained sand not far away.

"Perhaps he is not dead," I thought.

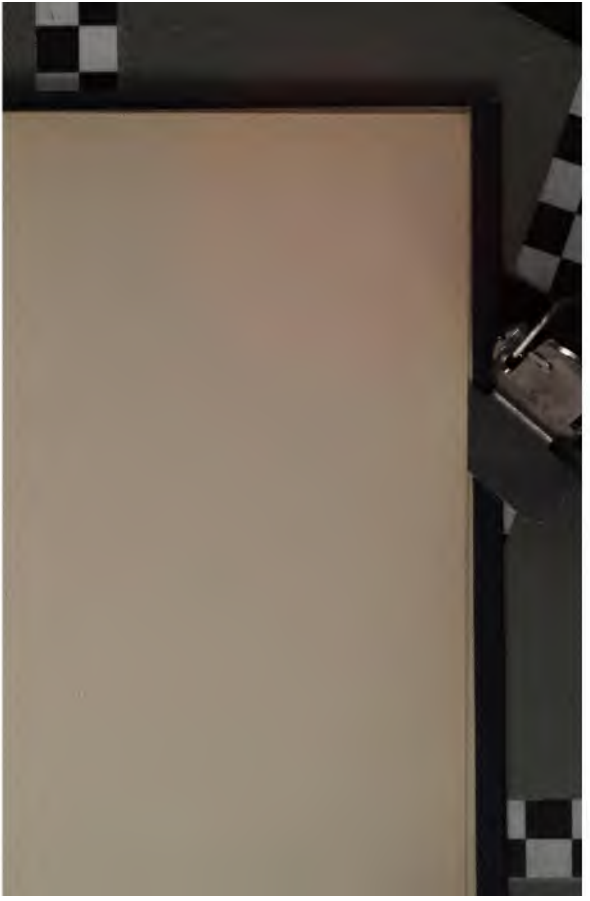
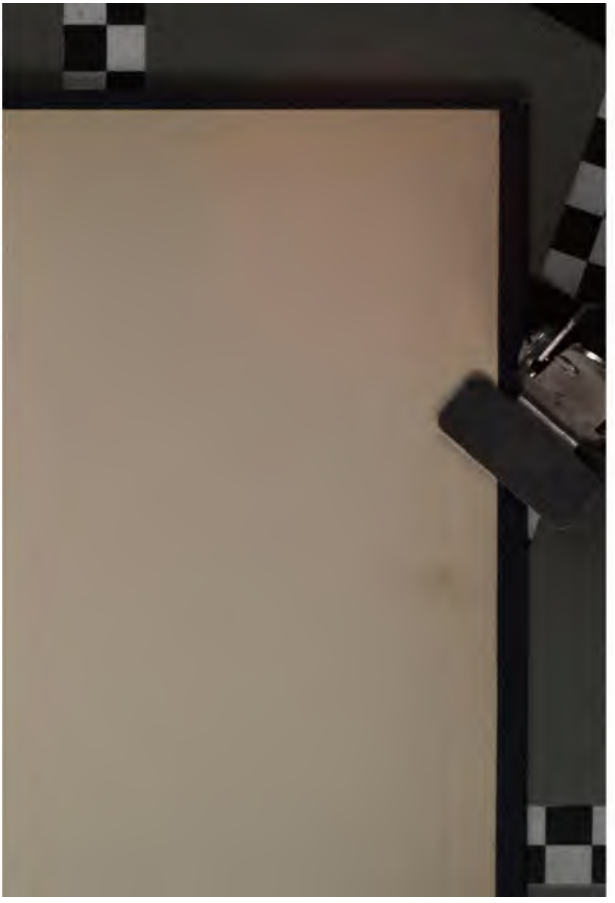
I had a vague desire to go to see. I would almost have been glad to restore him to life. The first rays of dawn surprised me in this irresolute frame of mind, and I reflected that prudence required me to leave that spot. I went and found Cristofano, who was sound asleep in his gondola, and whom I had much difficulty in waking. The sight of that placid slumber aroused my envy. Like Macbeth, I had taken leave of it for a long time to come.

I returned, gently rocked by the waves which the approach of the sun had already tipped with pink. I passed quite near the steamboat which runs from Venice to Trieste. It was its hour for starting; the wheels were already beating the water into foam, and red sparks flew upward from the funnel, with columns of black smoke. Several boats brought belated passengers. A gondola grated against ours and made fast to the packet. A man and woman left that gondola and ran lightly up the gangway. They were no sooner on the deck than the steamer started at full speed. The couple leaned over the rail to watch the wake. I recognized Juliette and Leoni. I thought that I was dreaming; I passed my hand over my eyes and called to Cristofano:

"Is that Baron Leone de Leoni starting for Trieste with a lady?"

"Yes, signor," he replied.

I uttered a horrible oath; then recalling the gondolier, I asked him:

"Who in God's name was the man we took to the Lido last night?"

"Why, as your Excellency knows," he replied, "it was Marquis Lorenzo de ——."